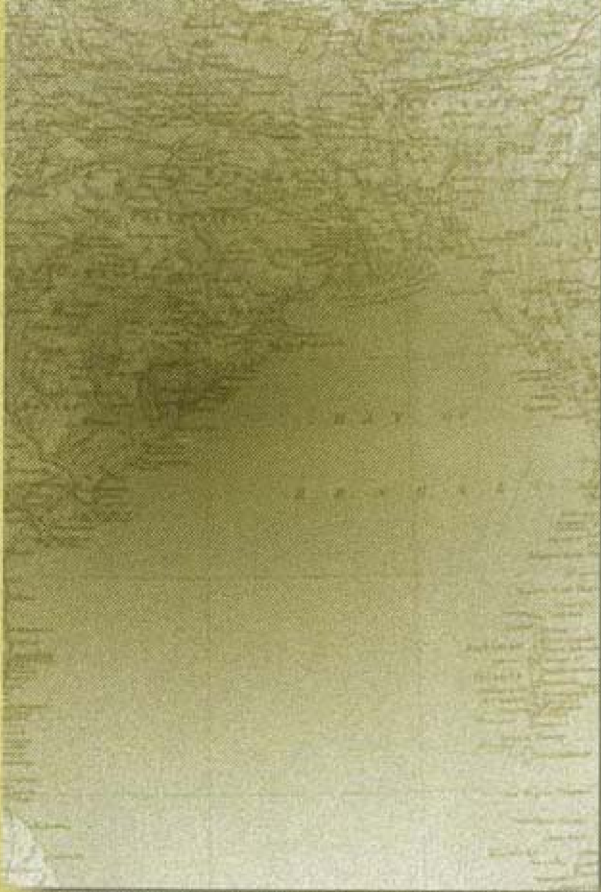


PRITISH ACHARYA

National Movement and Politics in Orissa, 1920-29

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Pritish Acharya

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The SAGE Team: Su Deep Kohli, Meena Chakravorty, Vijaya Ramachandran and Trinankur Banerjee

To

my mother, Shrimati Parvati Devi

Contents

List of Abbreviations

AB Patrika	Amrit Bazar Patrika
AICC	All India Congress Committee
AIKB	All India Khadi Board
BBN	Bir Bikram Natakavali
BNR	Bengal Nagpur Railways
B&O Govt.	Bihar and Orissa Government
B&O LCP	Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council Proceedings
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CWC	Congress Working Committee
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CW	Collected Works
DCC	District Congress Committee
EPW	Economic and Political Weekly
FMG	Fakir Mohan Granthavali
Home. Poll	Home Department, Political Section
INC	The Indian National Congress
FRBO	Fortnightly Report from Bihar & Orissa
GB	Gopabandhu Das
GBR	Gopabandhu Rachanavali
GG	Gangadhar Granthavali
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
LAD	Legislative Assembly Proceedings
NCM	Non-Cooperation Movement
NCERT	National Council Of Educational Research and Training

NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
MSG	Madhusudan Granthavali
OHCP	Orissa History Congress Proceedings
OONS	Oriya O Nava Sambad
PCC	Provincial Congress Committee
Poll. Special	Political Department, Special Section
RECOS	Report of the Enquiry Committee, Orissa State-1939
RG	Radhanath Granthavali
RNNB	Report of Native Newspapers—Bengal
	Report in the INC Proceedings-Report in the Indian National Congress Proceedings
SH	Sambalpur Hiteishini
SP	Superintendent of Police
SR of Orissa	Final Report on the Revenue Settlement of Orissa (Settlement Report)
TA	Travelling Allowances
UD	Utkal Dipika
US	Utkal Sevak
UPCC	Utkal Provincial Congress Committee
USSP	Utkal Swarajya Siksha Parishad
UUC	Utkal Union Conference

Series Editors' Preface

The SAGE Series in Modern Indian History is intended to bring together the growing volume of historical studies that share a very broad common historiographic focus.

In the 60 years since independence from colonial rule, research and writing on modern Indian history has given rise to intense debates resulting in the emergence of different schools of thought. Prominent among them are the Cambridge School and the Subaltern School. Some of us at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, along with many colleagues in other parts of the country, have tried to promote teaching and research along somewhat different lines. We have endeavoured to steer clear of colonial stereotypes, nationalist romanticization, sectarian radicalism and rigid and dogmatic approach. We have also discouraged the "flavour of the month" approach, which tries to ape whatever is currently fashionable.

Of course, a good historian is fully aware of contemporary trends in historical writing and of historical work being done elsewhere, and draws heavily on the comparative approach, that is, the historical study of other societies, states and nations, and on other disciplines, especially economics, political science, sociology and social anthropology. A historian tries to understand the past and make it relevant to the present and the future. History thus also caters to the changing needs of society and social development. A historian is a creature of his or her times, yet a good historian tries to use every tool available to the historian's craft to avoid a conscious bias to get as near the truth as possible.

The approach we have tried to evolve looks sympathetically, though critically, at the Indian national liberation struggle and other popular movements such as those of labour, peasants, lower castes, tribal people and women. It also looks at colonialism as a structure and a system, and analyzes changes in economy, society and culture in the colonial context as also in the context of independent India. It focuses on communalism and casteism as major features of modern Indian development. The volumes in the series will tend to reflect this approach as also its changing and developing features. At the broadest plane our approach is committed to the enlightenment values of rationalism, humanism, democracy and secularism.

The series will consist of well-researched volumes with a wider scope which deal with a significant historiographical aspect even while devoting meticulous attention to detail. They will have a firm empirical grounding based on an exhaustive and rigorous examination of primary sources (including those available in archives in different parts of India and often abroad); collections of private and institutional papers; newspapers and journals (including those in Indian languages); oral testimony; pamphlet literature; and contemporary literary works. The books in this series, while sharing a broad historiographic approach, will invariably have considerable differences in analytical frameworks. The many problems that hinder academic pursuit in developing societies—for example, relatively poor library facilities, forcing scholars to run from library to library and city to city and yet not being able to find many of the necessary books; inadequate institutional support within universities; a paucity of research-funding organizations; a relatively underdeveloped publishing industry, and so on—have plagued historical research and writing as well. All this had made it difficult to initiate and sustain efforts at publishing a series along the lines of the Cambridge History series or the history series of some of the best US and European universities. But the need is there because, in the absence of such an effort, a vast amount of work on Indian history being done in Delhi and other university centres in India as also in British, US, Russian, Japanese, Australian and European

universities which shares a common historiographic approach remains scattered and has no "voice". Also, many fine works published by small Indian publishers never reach the libraries and bookshops in India or abroad. We are acutely aware that one swallow does not make a summer. This series will only mark the beginning of a new attempt at presenting the efforts of scholars to evolve autonomous (but not indigenist) intellectual approaches in modern Indian history.

Bipan Chandra
Mridula Mukherjee
Aditya Mukherjee

Acknowledgements

As a school going child, I got interested in the discipline of history, for I desired to hear more about the fascinating "story" of the Indian freedom struggle. History, I was told, is a "treasure box" of many such interesting and fascinating stories, which have actually happened in the society. My teacher (and uncle), Girija S. Acharya, was instrumental in creating that interest in me. The interest finally brought me to the Centre for Historical Studies in Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) for higher studies in 1982. During those M.A and then M.Phil days, many teachers, such as S. Gopal, Romila Thapar, Satish Chandra, Bipan Chandra, S. Bhattacharya, K.N. Panikkar, Harbans Mukhia, Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Niladri Bhattacharya, M. Alam, and Bhagwan Josh, helped me to sustain the interest in, and to see the vastness of, the subject through their class lectures, tutorial supervisions and seminar discussions. Many of these great teachers may not remember me, as I was a regular "back-bencher" in those great moments. However, as some sort of a writer I had been quietly and attentively observing their deliberations, relishing and feeling their ideas within, and, despite imperfections, trying to reflect them through my short-stories and essays published in different Oriya journals of that time. I am indebted to each one of these great teachers, for my interest in research on Orissan studies, especially the modern period.

The present work is part of my research on the history of national movement and politics in Orissa during the 1920s. An earlier draft

of this work has been accepted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by JNU, New Delhi, in 1992. I am deeply indebted to Bipan Chandra, Professor of Modern History at JNU who supervised and guided me with great patience and utmost care, allowing me to freely pursue my ideas. Not only during the writing of the thesis and revision of this draft, but also throughout the whole of my university career from studentship to teaching, he has been a great source of help and inspiration to me. In spite of his sincere guidance, many errors may still have crept in. I am alone responsible for such imperfections. Two other teachers of mine, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee from JNU, and friends, such as Shri Krishan, Chandi Prasad, Lata Singh and Bob Curie in JNU, S.V. Srinivas, Sushant Naik, Tamo Mibang and Rachob Taba in Arunachal University, Arjun Dev, Dinesh Sharma, Nasiruddin Khan, M.A. Hussain and Archana in NCERT, and Siddharth Mahapatra, Lingaraj, Sunit Patel, Abhay, Ashok Patnaik and B.K. Mallik in Orissa have deepened my understanding of the subject through discussions and criticism. I sincerely thank all of them.

Many of the historical characters, who find mention in the work, were great writers themselves. Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das Nilakhantha Das, Harekrishna Mahatab, Godavarish Mishra, Birkishor Das and many others were both, great leaders of the movement as well as very powerful writers in Oriya. Similarly, creative writers like Fakir Mohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Rao, Gangadhar Meher and Gopal Chandra Praharaj were no small observers of the political developments of their time. Through their creative writings in different genres like poetry, short-stories, novels, essays and dramas they have reflected the social realism in subtle manner, and have tried to help us in our understanding of the historical development of the period. This kind of fusion of creative writings with full time political activities has been a very fascinating aspect to me. Their writings (as well as many other source materials like the vernacular newspapers) are available in Oriya language only. My acquaintance with the language, which is my mother tongue and personal interest in literary writings have surely been an advantage to me. Though it is

not sufficient to ensure the academic quality of the work, without it, I must acknowledge, the present study would have been far more deficient than it is now. Further, but for my personal limitations, the rendering of quotations and idioms, and so on into English would have been far more well communicated and articulated than they actually appear in this work. Though they are no more today, I am indebted to these writer-activists as they teach the beautiful art of making fusions between "working" and "writing" in life and society. In specific terms, they also help a student like me to sustain interest both in research as well as in literature.

Many scholars and researchers have worked on various aspects of Orissan history. Notable among them are: Satyanarayan Rajguru, K.C. Panigrahi, R.D. Banerji, Harekrishna Mahatab, N.K. Sahu, J.V. Boulton, H. Kulke, M.N. Das, B.C. Ray, P.K. Mishra, J.K. Samal, B.C. Majumdar, G.S. Das, K.M. Patra, S.C. Patra, Nivedita Mohanti, Biswamoy Pati, Sadasib Pradhan, K. Mojumdar, A.C. Pradhan, Amal K. Mishra, Basanta K. Mallik and Radhakant Barik. Their studies have impacted my understanding of the subject and my research in various ways. A glimpse of this work would reveal it. This, however, no way assures that, in my work, I have been able to understand and digest their ideas. Similarly, I have also been benefited by the studies of Sumit Sarkar, B.N. Pande, P.C. Bamford, J.C. Jha, and many others. I express my gratitude to all these scholars.

My gratitude is also due to the Director and staff of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Library, JNU Library, Regional Language Library, Central Secretariat Library, Gandhi Museum and Library, Sahitya Academi Library (all in Delhi), Utkal Sahitya Samaj Library (Cuttack) National Library (Kolkata), and Arunachal University Library (Itanagar). I also thank the staff of National Archives of India (New Delhi), Bihar State Archives (Patna) and Orissa State Archives (Bhubaneswar) for their help.

My father, Shri Hemchandra Acharya, a creative writer and an activist of the Socialist movement in the 1960s and thereafter, with a rich sense of history, has always been a sounding board for my understanding of many events and persons of the national movement

in Orissa. I express my sincere gratitude to him. Anjali, Ipsit and Anurag also have helped in a number of ways.

I am very thankful to SAGE Publications India Pvt. Limited, the publisher of SAGE Series in Modern Indian History for accepting my manuscript for publication in the series. I would also like to thank Su Deep Kohli, SAGE's commissioning editor along with Rekha Natarajan and Meena Chakravorty who have helped at every stage of editing and production of the book.

Pritish Acharya

Introduction

Orissa extends from 17°49′ N to 22°34′ N latitude and from 81°29′ E to 87°29′ E longitude on the eastern coast of India. It has an area of around 155, 707 sq. km. Bounded by the states of West Bengal to the north-east, Jharkhand to the north, Chhatisgarh to the west, Andhra Pradesh to the south and the Bay of Bengal to the east, it was separated from Bihar and came into being on 1 April 1936. Today, the state is divided into 30 administrative districts and three revenue divisions. Since 1956, Bhubaneswar has been its capital. Until then, the capital was located in the historic city of Cuttack at the apex of the Mahanadi Delta.

Orissa was variously known as Kalinga, Utkal, Orissa, Odisa and Odra Desa in the past. However, in contemporary times, the term "Orissa", locally pronounced as "Odisha", has become more acceptable than all its other names. Both the people and the local language are known as "Oriya". Besides the Oriya-speaking people, who generally live in the plains and the foothills, Orissa has a number of aboriginal tribes, who remain confined for the most part to the hills.

The term "Orissa" is derived from the Sanskrit *Odra Vishaya* or *Odra Desa*. In Pali, the people living in this land are referred to as *Oddaka* and in Sanskrit *Odrah.* Sarala Das, the poet who wrote the Mahabharat in Oriya and was a pioneer of the Oriya language in medieval times, mentions *Odra Rastra* and *Odisha*. Around the

same time, Kapilendra Deva, the Gajapati king who ruled Orissa from 1435–67 and built up a vast empire, called his territory *Odisa* or *Odisha Rajya* in his royal proclamation inscribed on the temple walls of Puri. Since then, the name *Odisha* or *Odisa* has persisted. In English it becomes Orissa.

In 1568, the Mughals defeated Prataprudra Deva and conquered Orissa. With the decline of the Mughals, the Marathas took over in 1751 and continued to rule till 1803, when the East India Company defeated them and brought the territory under its control. The consolidation of British rule and the defiance to it by the local people went on simultaneously in Orissa. Skirmishes against the British continued throughout the nineteenth century as they introduced rapid changes in society against the wishes of the people. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the local rajas and zamindars became the instruments of bringing about colonial changes and had to face the wrath of the people. Described as *meli*s and *bidroha* in regional writings, these local rebellions were ruthlessly suppressed and their leaders punished by the British.

* * *

The Indian national movement is unique in the political history of the modern world. It was one of the biggest mass movements of our times, which mobilized millions of people belonging to all classes and sections of society throughout the length and breadth of the country. Based on the urge for a common nationhood, reaction against and opposition to colonial rule and a desire for a better life, it roughly began over a decade before the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885, and uninterruptedly continued until Independence in 1947. Its study continues to be relevant because the foundation of modern India, which comprises a number of regional and local societies, was laid during the period. Any effort to make further reconstruction of these numerous societies needs to be based on a comprehensive and objective study of the national movement and its inter-relation with the regional societies.

Orissa provides an actual historical example of a distinct regional society which, on the one hand, had her peculiar linguistic and cultural problems, and, on the other, regularly responded to the

emerging political movement of an all-India character, the Indian national movement. Her responses to the national movement were probably unique and different from those of other parts of India in terms of strategy as well as objectives. The movement in Orissa was not a mere replication of the national movement outside. It was an integral part of the Indian national movement, but it also had its own inner dynamics. Due to this, a study of the historical development in Orissa during the period would not only be interesting, but also be important for understanding the regional peculiarities there. The present work is only a small and modest attempt in that direction.

Here, only a short period of 10 years (1920–29) has been taken with the objective of making the study focused and pinpointed. A micro-level study of this type will not, I hope, be considered deficient in throwing light towards the understanding of such a prolonged and widespread movement as the Indian national movement. Ideally speaking, a regional study of this nature should be helpful in the analysis and examination of the broad observations being made on many general-level studies of the subject. I will feel extremely gratified if my work is of any help in that regard.

* * *

The present work, as the title suggests, purports to study the national movement and politics in Orissa in the 1920s. During the period, the Non-Cooperation Movement was a major political development. Hence, the study tries to focus on the movement, the developments, which preceded the movement, and the aftermath of the movement in the state. In 1930, the nationalists launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, the second major mass campaign, in the country. Their preparations and other political developments preceding the campaign have also been looked into. The work is mainly based on the available government official records, such as the Fortnightly Reports from the Bihar and Orissa governments and the Reports of the Political Department (Special Section) of the state; contemporary newspapers, published in Orissa (the *Samaj*, the *Utkal Dipika*, the *Asha*, the *Utkal Sevak*, the *Seba*, the *Sadhana* and the likes), Calcutta (the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*) and Patna (the *Searchlight*); literary

writings and biographical reminiscences by the participants and witnesses of the politics; and other academic publications in the area. The work stretches over four main chapters. First, Politics of Early Nationalism: Intellectuals in Orissa; second, Non-Cooperation in Orissa, 1920–22; third, Aftermath of Non-Cooperation, 1923–27; and fourth, Emergence of New Forces, 1927–29.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the regional peculiarities of the state and focuses on the understanding and examination of the national movement in a given historical context. It discusses the meaning of nation, nationalism and national life, as understood by the intelligentsia then, and the genesis of nationalism in Orissa in the late nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Other focal points of discussion are the emergence of a new intelligentsia as the opinion makers of society, the intelligentsia's concern for a respectable and modern social order, the agitation for an Oriya linguistic and cultural identity, the formation of the Utkal Union Conference (UUC) as an organized forum for socio-political movements, the different political trends within the UUC, the forms of agitation in the early days, and the organizational linkages between the local movement and the anti-colonial forces outside Orissa. Besides, this chapter also discusses the nature and character of the internal struggle between different groups of intellectuals for establishing hegemony over the emerging nationalist agitation, and emphasizes how the emergence and subsequent assertion of one trend, that is, the moderate nationalists, led to the near marginalization of the other two trends in politics.

Interestingly, this coincided with the formation of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee (UPCC) in Orissa in December 1920.

The second chapter deals with the Non-Cooperation Movement in the state. On the eve of the launching of the movement, several streams of nationalists grew in different places. Oriya students studying in Patna, Calcutta and Madras got attracted towards nationalism and formed informal groups among themselves. Their coming together had resulted in the formation of the UPCC in the state. The large-scale deaths and scarcity due to drought and famine

and the spread of epidemics like malaria and influenza created an atmosphere that became unfriendly, and at times quite hostile, towards the government. The nationalists not only articulated public resentment through the press and other forums like public meetings, but also organized relief for the victims. This led to their (nationalists) emergence as an alternative force to the government. Further, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Committee failed to satiate the local nationalist intelligentsia who had been moderately agitating for the amalgamation of all Oriya-speaking tracts under one political administration. The nationalists' hopes from the *mai–bap* nature of the British government were further belied when the "Punjab killings" took place in 1919. It nagged them into changing their understanding of the nature of the British rule in India. Many liberal thinkers were now convinced that the British decision to rule over India was against the interests of the local people. Besides, the discussion also focuses on the creation of a local ethos, use of local cultural symbols and mobilization of people through local issues by the leadership. Further, it discusses the response of different sections of people to the movement, the various forms of agitation, the reasons why some particular forms became popular, the different types of nationalist institutions created during the period, and their overall impact on the movement. While evaluating the movement, it focuses on the spontaneous participation of students, as well as the poor response of the tribals.

The third chapter is on the aftermath of non-cooperation. It discusses the various "negative" developments that took place during this "non-active phase" of the national movement. Regionalism grew in various forms; the INC split into several factions; corruption charges were levelled against many prominent Congressmen; and communal riots broke out in the state for the first time in its history. There is a detailed discussion on the activities of the Swarajists inside and outside the councils. Similarly, the No-Changers' involvement in various constructive programmes and local boards also finds mention. There were differences between these two main Congress groups; there was also coordination between them. In public parlance, all these nationalists belonged

to "one single party", which was pitted against the alien "government party".

The fourth chapter focuses on the emergence of new forces in 1928–29, such as the students and the youth, women, labour, peasants and "low" castes and their relationship with the Congress. It was a period of unity within the Congress as well as among the different nationalist forces. The process of unity got accelerated by Mahatma Gandhi's timely tour of the state in December 1927 and the Bardoli *Satyagraha* and Anti-Simon agitation in early 1928. An interesting aspect of the political developments during the period was that these issues raised by these two movements were internalized and made very regional and "real" to the local people. Thus, Orissa was declared to have "more reasons than others to boycott the Simon Commission". Similarly, the Bardoli *Satyagraha* was recast in the form of no-rent-hike agitations in a number of places including some princely states in Orissa. The chapter also emphasizes the undercurrent of nationalist activities even during the non-active phase of the movement, that is, 1923–27. These activities, whether in the form of organization of party conferences and meetings or in the form of undertaking of Gandhian constructive programmes, worked as the key to the forthcoming mass movement to be led by the Congress. Without them, it probably would not have been easy for the INC to hold sway over the new forces during their emergence in the late 1920s, and to lead and coordinate the anti-colonial mass agitations in the 1930s.

ONE

Politics of Early Nationalism: Intellectuals in Orissa

Orissa became a separate state in April 1936. Until then it formed parts of various presidencies and provinces. Till 1905, the southern parts comprising Ganjam and the adjoining *gadjat*s or princely states belonged to the Madras Presidency, the western section comprising Sambalpur and the adjoining *gadjat*s came under the Central Provinces, while the Orissa Division including Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and a few *gadjat*s formed a part of the Bengal Presidency. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 26 *gadjat*s were ruled by the feudal princes under British patronage.[1] The region directly administered by the government was known as *Mughalbandi* (tied to the Mughals), a term in use since Mughal times. In 1905, the Oriya-speaking tracts under the Central Provinces were amalgamated with the Bengal Presidency. In 1912, a separate Bihar and Orissa state was carved out of the Bengal Presidency with the Orissa Division becoming one of its main parts. By then almost the whole of Orissa except the southern parts had been brought under one political administration. The process culminated in the formation of a separate state of Orissa in 1936.

[1] The 26 *gadjat*s were: Athagarh, Athmallik, Baramaba, Bamanda, Baud, Bonai, Gangpur, Ghumsar, Hindol, Keonjhar, Khandapara, Jeypore, Nilagiri, Dhenkanal, Paralakhemundi, Patna-Kalahandi, Mayurbhanj, Narsinghpur, Rairakhol, Daspalla, Ranapur, Sukinda, Sonepur, Nayagarh, Talcher and Tigiria. See, Chakrapani Pradhan and Niranjan Patnaik. *Two Bachelor of Arts*, *The Oriya Movement*, *Being a Demand for a United Province*, Ganjam, 1919, p. 75.

In other words, Orissa was not a single province, nor did it have an official name during the period under study. Hence, what is meant by "Orissa" here is the territory inhabited by the Oriya-speaking people. In contemporary writings, as well as in common parlance, this then was considered Orissa proper.

In 1803, the Marathas, who ruled Orissa since the decline of the Mughals, were defeated by the British and the state came under British sway. With this began a process of rapid colonization. At the same time, resistance movements against colonization and its various forms became quite conspicuous. Locally known as *meli*s or *bidroha*, some of these movements were:

1. The Revolt of Jayi Rajguru, Khurda, 1804.
2. Paik Revolt, Khurda, 1817–24.
3. Kondh *Meli*, Ghumsar, 1835–37.
4. The Revolt of Surendra Sai, Sambalpur, 1829–48, 1857–62.
5. Banki *Meli*, 1840.
6. Angul Praja *Meli*, 1848.
7. Baud Praja *Meli*, 1862.
8. Mayurbhanj Santhal *Meli*, 1866.
9. Nilagiri Praja *Meli*, 1875.
10. Damapada *Meli*, 1876.
11. Narsinghpur *Meli*, 1876.
12. Nayagarh *Meli*, 1893–95.
13. Daspalla *Meli*, 1913–14.
14. Dhenkanal Praja *Meli*, 1922.
15. Kanika Praja *Meli*, 1921–22, etc.[2]

Based on local issues, such as the dismissal of princes and zamindars, hike in land revenue, excessive extortion of labour rent for "developmental activities" like road and building construction, these *meli*s were very often led by the displaced zamindars, ex-*dewan*s and local princes, and were supported by the local civilian population. The British, with superior arms, suppressed them

[2] For details see Prasanna K. Mishra, *Political Unrest in Orissa in the Nineteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1983; K.M. Patra, *Orissa Under the East India Company*, New Delhi, 1971; Sadasib Pradhan, *Agrarian and Political Movement, States of Orissa*, New Delhi, 1986; Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Atmajibana Charita*, Cuttack, 1991 (reprint).

ruthlessly and "treated" their leaders "suitably". While more stubborn leaders such as Jayi Rajguru, the Khurda *dewan* and royal preceptor, was hanged and Hathi Singh, the zamindar of Ghess in Sambalpur, deported to "*Kaalapani*", a "pliable" rebel, Mukund Dev II, the prince of Khurda, was released from jail, awarded an annual pension and re-settled at Puri.[3] Despite being crushed by the government and denied adequate attention in the contemporary press and literary writings, the *meli*s undoubtedly left a long and strong tradition of defiance to British rule in the state.

I

The emergence of a new educated class was a significant development of the late nineteenth century Oriyan history. Though a microscopic minority, this class showed interest in common societal issues concerning the general welfare of people. By using modern idioms and vocabulary, it started to set priorities for the ruling class as well as for the people. Following this, a marked departure in the state's political life was apparent. From then on, politics was no longer the sole prerogative of the feudal and dominant classes. Through its active intervention, the new educated class broadened the scope and extended the radius of politics in the region. The late nineteenth century, thus, could be seen as the beginning of a new phase in modern politics in Orissa.

Broadly described as the nationalist intelligentsia,[4] some members of the new educated class took up various programmes

[3] B.C. Roy, *Foundations of British Rule in Orissa*, Cuttack, 1960, p. 68.

[4] Gopal Chandra Praharaj, in his novel *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya* (1900), explained an intellectual as a thinking person, different from a *prakrutistha* (materialist) person who basically lives for himself. In contrast, the thinking person, because of his sincere concern for the general welfare of society, does not care about his personal needs. As Praharaj described, the societal crises are due to the lack of sufficient number of thinking persons. Otherwise "the earth would have been heaven", he concluded. See, Praharaj, *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya*, 1900, Cuttack, reprint, n. d. (1st edition), p. 114.
For nation, the term "*jati*" and "*desho*" are used in contemporary writings. *Desho* includes a whole range of territorial units—from one's native village to one's country. Thus, *Odiya jati* or *Odiya desho* would find mention in a very liberal way, without any opposition to the notion of the Indian nation or nationalism. *Jati* or *desho* also means a mass of people. See, Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Prayaschita*, Cuttack, 1986 (new edition); Praharaj, *Bhagabat*, p. 118.

for realizing its vision of social and national development. Though there were variations within, the programmes had common basis and aimed at a mass-level national awakening.

There was an understanding among the intelligentsia that traditional society was decadent and needed certain reforms, the lack of which would further strengthen foreign rule in the state. Foreign rulers included the Muslims and the Marathas, who preceded the British in Orissa. More than that, the Bengali and Telugu officials dominating the lower levels of local administration as well as the Marwari and Gujarati traders monopolizing the local market were also described as "foreigners" in contemporary literary writings. Fakir Mohan in his *Utkal Bhramana* (1892) wrote:

> Marwadi Kapodia Bhojpuri Modis
> Have blocked the entry of others in trade and commerce …
> All hakim and lawyers are foreigners
> Even the postal clerk is not *desi* [from Orissa].[5]

Surprisingly, the British are rarely described as "foreigners" or hostile rulers in these works.[6] Still, the "foreignness" of the British as well as the fact that they were the sole rulers of India provided the necessary filler to the intellectuals' reactions. The British were alien. Besides, the progress and development visible at their home front were not apparent in the colony. Like other perceived social evils, the British were gradually seen as a stumbling block towards the realization of the goals of reforms, 'modern' development and national awakening.[7] Hence, the intelligentsia's reform programmes, critique of British rule and the subsequent rise of nationalist upsurge could be seen in an integrated form in Orissa during the late nineteenth century.

[5] Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Fakir Mohan Granthavali* (henceforth *FMG*), Part I, Cuttack, 1957, p. 202 and Part II, Cuttack, 1963, p. 677; also see, Jagabandhu Singh, *Prachin Utkal*, Part I, Cuttack, 1982 (3rd ed.), pp. 3–7. All translations from Oriya into English, unless otherwise specified are mine throughout the work.

[6] Fakir Mohan Senapati calls British rule in Orissa the "golden age" of history (*FMG*, Part II, p. 678).

[7] Jagabandhu Singh, *Prachin Utkal*, Part II, Bhubaneswar, 1982, reprint 3rd ed., p. 37.

The emergence of the nationalist intelligentsia could be traced back to the 1860s when Orissa fell prey to a severe famine. Locally known as *Naanka Durvikhya*, the famine (1865–66) took a toll of over one million human lives, that is, nearly one-third of the population in the affected areas.[8] The famine brought about a perceptible change in the social, political and intellectual life of the state. Fakir Mohan has discussed it at great length in his autobiography. Later (1900) he stated that only after the famine did the government begin to pay some attention to Orissa.[9] The intelligentsia looked afresh at the nature of British rule and linked it with the underdevelopment of the state. The tragedy was largely attributed to the government's unwise famine policy. The inadequate relief and the state's *laissez faire* policy did little to check the price rise and pushed the poor people to starvation. The native officials being mostly "outsiders" (non-Oriyas), apparently misled the administration. The intelligentsia complained that this aggravated the crises.[10] Following the famine, the intellectuals began to address both the administration as well as the people. Such efforts at establishing a two-way link between the authorities and the people ushered in the process of mobilization of the people, and of nation-making in Orissa. The year 1866, thus, became a turning point in the modern history of the state.

I.a

The late nineteenth century intellectuals traced the source of all social and political ills to the general ignorance of the people. The spread of knowledge among the masses occupied a pivotal position

[8] There have been varying estimates on the loss of human lives. However, having gone into the details of various sources including the government records, etc., Bidyut Mohanty has concluded that the mortality would be above one million; See Bidyut Mohanty, "Orissa Famine of 1866", *Economic and Political Weekly* (*EPW*), 2–9 January 1993, p. 37. Fakir Mohan Senapati, an eyewitness, estimated the deaths, including the post-famine deaths, to be nearly 3 million lives. See, Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Atmajivana*, p. 29.
[9] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 678.
[10] Senapati gives a graphic account of how the *amla*s belonging to Bengal misled the commissioner of Orissa, the "noble hearted" T.E. Ravenshaw, about the foodgrain stock in the state. Senapati, *Atmajivana*, pp. 29–32.

in their programme of action and they consequently set up schools themselves. They also helped the government in its educational programmes and persuaded the local affluent classes, the princes and the zamindars, to take up the cause of education.

Fakir Mohan later wrote that he would motivate the village children to go to school and sometimes even paid the tuition fees of needy students.[11] Pyari Mohan Acharya, who later became a noted historian, started the Cuttack Academy in the early 1870s, which was upgraded to high school level in 1879.[12] Madhusudan Rao (1853–1912), one of the pioneers of modern Oriya poetry, taught in government schools and brought out a journal, *Shikshabandhu*, for motivating teachers.[13] Fakir Mohan (1843–1918), another great writer, set up a high school at Remuna in Balasore District. Radhanath Ray (1848–1908), a great poet himself, who worked as an inspector of schools, did his job with a missionary zeal.[14] New schools were established and the enrolment increased manifold due to his "sincere efforts".[15]

Persuading the princely class to start new schools and to extend financial help to needy students was also on the intelligentsia's agenda. This they did by criticizing those princes and zamindars who neglected education and at the same time by showering praise on those who patronized it in their respective states and estates.[16] The Utkal Union Conference (UUC), locally called the *Utkal Sammilani*, which was founded as an organized forum of the Orissa intellectuals in 1903, regularly passed resolutions exhorting the princely class to promote modern education in the *gadjat*s.[17] Partly

[11] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 57.

[12] His rustication from school for critiquing the district magistrate had prompted him to start this school where students would become "independent minded". For funds, he worked as a private tutor of the Damapada prince. Anant Mishra, ed., *Madhusudan Granthavali* (*MSG*), Cuttack, 1991 (new edition), p. 30.

[13] Mishra, *MSG*, p. 38.

[14] P. Mukherjee, *History of Orissa*, Vol. IV, Cuttack, 1964, p. 444.

[15] Trinath Patnaik, ed., *Radhanath Granthavali* (*RG*), Cuttack, 1984, pp. 5–6, 14. In 1877, the total number of school students was around 40,000, which increased to 140,000 by 1900 largely due to the "poet's efforts".

[16] *Oriya O Navasambad* (*OONS*), 3 July 1895, in the *Report of Native Newspapers—Bengal* (*RNNB*), for the week ending 10 August 1895.

[17] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, Appendix F, p. 329.

because of such motivation, imparting of education became a major concern for many princes.[18] With direct support from them, high schools came up in Bamanda, Dhenkanal, Mayurbhanj and some other *gadjat*s. Ramachandra Bhanjdeo, the Mayurbhanj prince, who emerged as a great patron of modern education, donated a good amount of money (Rs 5000) to the medical school (1875) and to the Cuttack College (1868) in 1877.[19]

The intelligentsia gave priority to scientific and technical education over traditional education during the period. For promoting vocational education, the UUC imparted training in "modern agriculture and in weaving with fly shuttle" to students so as to make them "self-reliant".[20] Fakir Mohan lamented that the education of babus lacked emphasis on basic "science and logic".[21]

Most intellectuals of the period were convinced that the vernacular language was the only medium through which knowledge could be disseminated. The *Utkal Dipika* (henceforth *UD*) wrote, "The vernacular was the only means for influencing the people and reaching out to the masses".[22] Gangadhar Meher (1862–1924), a pioneer of modern Oriya poetry, said, "If one, devoid of love for the motherland and mother tongue, becomes wise, who else could be called ignorant in the society?"[23] Fakir Mohan compared the nation with a river whose strength depends entirely on its original currents (mother tongue) and not on flood waters (alien language).[24] He blamed the "so called" educated babus, "the carriers of imitation culture", for their distaste for their mother tongue and asked whether there was "a single example of a developed nation [in the world] which has ever neglected its vernacular".[25] Passing of resolutions in the UUC, urging the

[18] The Khariar prince, Bikram Deo, started a school and not a temple, in neighbouring Mahasamund in memory of his father in 1907. U. Mohanty, ed., *Bira Bikram Natakavali* (*BBN*), Titilagarh, 1976, p. 14.
[19] See, P. Kar, *Indian National Congress and Orissa: 1885–1936*, Cuttack, 1987, p. 13.
[20] Two Bachelors of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, Appendix F, pp. 300–331.
[21] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 210.
[22] *UD*, 16 February 1895, in *RNNB*, 6 April 1896.
[23] Nagendranath Pradhan, ed., *Gangadhar Granthavali* (*GG*), Cuttack, 1990 (reprint), p. 62.
[24] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 724.
[25] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 211.

government to make provisions for Oriya education in the outlying Oriya tracts had become a regular affair for the UUC.[26] The intelligentsia, however, did not dissuade Indians from learning English, "one of the developed languages in the world today".[27] They were mainly critical of the culture of imitation and the consequent neglect of one's own culture.

Education of women was considered very important, for it was seen as the key to mass education. To Fakir Mohan, educating women amounted to educating the whole *jati*, mass of people. His epoch-making short story, *Rebati*, is about a girl's intense desire for getting elementary education.[28] The *Sevak* demanded not only the opening of girls' schools, but also that they be upgraded to institutes of higher education for women.[29] In 1897, Krishna Prasad Choudhury linked the problem of illiteracy to religion (Hinduism), "which literally debarred women from being educated".[30] As an alternative to such a situation, Fakir Mohan began a girls' wing in the Balasore High School in the 1860s. However, the enrolment was quite poor, for "barring a few Christians, no parents would send their daughters to the school", laments the noted author in his autobiography.[31] Championing of only girls' schools was a strategy for augmenting more enrolments. Otherwise, Fakir Mohan and his contemporary intellectuals never objected to co-education.

I.b

The intelligentsia felt that one of the handicaps of Oriyan society was the lack of proper communication between the government and the people. The famine of 1866 was largely attributed to this. Despite being "noble hearted", the local British officials could not be effective, for they were not made aware of the severity of the

[26] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, pp. 334–35.
[27] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 210.
[28] Senapati, *Prayaschita*, Cuttack, 1986 (new edition), p. 13; Fakir Mohan Senapati, *Galpasalpa*, Part I, Cuttack, 1980 (new edition), p. 12.
[29] *Sevak*, 27 June 1885, in *RNNB*, 1885 .
[30] Asit Kabi, *Odiya Prabandha Sahityar Itihas*, Cuttack, 1978, p. 63.
[31] Senapati, *Atmajivana*, p. 27.

famine, argued Fakir Mohan while recounting the tragedy.[32] Gopal Chandra Praharaj, in a similar vein concluded that Queen Victoria, the "mother" with her "motherly love", was eager to redress the grievances, "but they are not communicated to her convincingly".[33] To Fakir Mohan, the Oriyan demands remained unattained because they were not communicated effectively.[34]

As a way out, the intelligentsia founded the modern press. Following the famine, Gouri Shankar Ray and Bichitrananda Das started the *UD*, the first Oriya weekly, in 1866, making it possible for Orissa-related issues to be publicly debated.[35] Similarly, Fakir Mohan and Govind Patnaik brought out the *Sambad Vahika* (1868) from Balasore, Pyari Mohan Acharya, the *Utkal Putra* (1873) and Chaturbhuj Patnaik, the *Samskaraka* (1883), from Cuttack. The number of newspapers and journals, which stood at only four in 1871, increased to nine by 1879, 19 by 1889 and 34 by 1900.[36]

Newspapers at the time were neither business enterprises nor were their editors and journalists professionals. Journalism was seen as a means of nationalist struggle rather than a lucrative profession. They were, in general, published as a public service and financed as objects of philanthropy. Fakir Mohan, in his autobiography, gave graphic details of the difficulties he and his friends had to face in starting the *Sambad Vahika* press at Balasore. However, their efforts continued, because the "press was essential for public education".[37] Similarly, Pyari Mohan, taking help from his friends, brought out the "*Utkal Putra* to assist the *UD* in its nationalist mission".[38]

The reality about the nationalist press was well articulated by Sapneswar Das, the editor of *Sadhana* (1923–25) in 1923. The *Patra–Patrika*, as the press is called in Oriya, were "public teachers" and their publication was a "mission", a kind of "service to the

[32] Senapati, *Atmajivana*, p. 32.
[33] Praharaj, *Bhagabat*, p. 117.
[34] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 744.
[35] C.S. Mahapatra, *Odisara Patra Patrika*, Bhubaneswar, 1989, p. 9.
[36] *UD*, 6 November 1920.
[37] Senapati, *Atmajivana*, pp. 35–40.
[38] Mishra, *MSG*, p. 28.

motherland". The editor is he "who pays from his pocket and runs behind a horse for reaping nothing but all material losses for himself". The financial constraints were so acute that, not less than five *patrika*s had to stop publication "just in two months time", wrote Das in April 1923.[39] The financial constraints were probably far more acute and the editors' personal sacrifices greater in the late nineteenth century than in the 1920s. Because the press was a "mission", the *Patrika*s were *sahayogi* (companion) to one another. In the battle for social reforms and freedom, the newspapers were not considered rivals, but compatriots to one another.[40]

The press included some weekly, fortnightly and monthly papers and journals in Oriya. The *Dainik Asha* (Berhampur), which started as a weekly in 1913, became the first daily to be published in 1927. It was followed by the *Samaj* which started as a weekly in 1919 and turned into a daily only in 1929. As late as in 1925, there was no English press in Orissa, which, in the nationalists' perception, was a great political and intellectual setback.

Most newspapers published by the intelligentsia were intermittent in their appearance because of severe financial constraints and many had a very short life span. Out of some 12 newspapers published between 1866 and 1878, all except two disappeared after "sometime", reported the *UD* in 1920.[41] In 1914, Fakir Mohan too lamented that except for two monthly journals, others could not come out regularly in the state.[42] "Regular journals" had a similar plight. For instance, the *Utkal Sahitya*, one of the two "regular" journals, started in 1897, stopped after two years due to unbearable financial constraints only to be revived in 1900 to continue till 1934. Devoted to literature and social issues for the development of the "Oriya *Jati*" it was published by Biswanath Kar in Cuttack. Kar had to "sacrifice" his job as a school teacher, his only source of livelihood, for maintaining the "regularity" of the journal. He took "personal loans to the tune of Rs 1,500" and "begged the princes

[39] *Sadhana*, 2 April 1923.
[40] *Sadhana*, 1 January1923.
[41] *UD*, 6 November 1920.
[42] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 741.

and zamindars for donations" to sustain the paper. Finally, the *Utkal Sahitya*, well-known for its literary standards, folded up in 1934, the year its founder editor died, observes Kar's biographer.[43]

Alternately, publications owned by the princes and zamindars were relatively affluent. The *Utkal Darpan* (1873) printed at De's Printing Press of Balasore by zamindar Baikunthanath De, the *Utkal Hiteishini* (1868) brought out from the Hiteishini Press of Cuttack by zamindar Kalipad Banerjee, the *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (1889) published from the Sudhal Press of Bamanda by Prince Sudhal Dev, and the *Gadjat Basini* (1900) printed at the Kishor Press of Talcher by the local prince, were a few such publications. Lack of regularity and lack of funds were their two distinct characteristics.[44] As educated people, their publishers took to reforms and other social issues alongside the nationalist intelligentsia. Often literary writings of Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Rao, Gangadhar Meher, Fakir Mohan and Gopinath Nanda came out in these publications.[45] Some nationalists like Nilamani Vidyaratna (*Sambalpur Hiteishini*) even worked as editors for these publications. However, the publications started by the princes and zamindars were termed as "loyalist" due to their uncritical support to the government. They often differed from their nationalist *sahayogi*s on the issues of social reform and political struggle. In terms of mass appeal too they lagged behind. It therefore becomes difficult to decide if they come under the nationalist fold or not.

I.c

A conviction common to all intellectuals of the period was that the existing social practices and religious beliefs were impediments to national progress and needed to be reformed at any cost. They symbolized decadence and were overdue for replacement by new

[43] Raghabananda Nayak, *Biswanath Kar*, Bhubaneswar, 1996, pp. 19–21.
[44] Mahapatra, *Odisara Patra Patrika*, p. 13.
[45] The authors profusely acknowledge the financial support given by the princes for publication in the preface of their works. See Pradhan, *GG*, pp. 53, 149, 241, 254; Patnaik, *RG*, pp. 31, 67, 85.

values such as reasoning, tolerance, liberty and a sense of human dignity.

Fakir Mohan rejected outright the existing *kusamskara*s (social evils), and appealed to the youth for their eradication at the earliest.[46] The local evils which attracted his literary genre were child marriage, social sanction against widow remarriage, the custom of old widowers' remarriage, religious superstitions and social sanction against women's education. His literature, which he defined as "a means of public education" abounded with such issues and extended suggestions for reform.[47]

Fakir Mohan and his contemporaries felt that the three main issues that is, child remarriage, old widowers' remarriage and the social ban on widow remarriage were interlinked. A girl child married to an old widower was destined to suffer widowhood, sometimes even before experiencing conjugal life. Fakir Mohan analyzes that when such child widows were denied the right of remarriage, society was bound to suffer from large-scale moral perversion. However, with regard to widow remarriage in general (those who had lived with their husbands), the author is silent. Others such as Gopal Chandra Praharaj were in agreement with Fakir Mohan. To maintain discipline and purity in society and to save it from decadence they argued for child widow's remarriage and condemned the custom of child marriage and old widowers' remarriage. Fakir Mohan writes:

> Old man in his sixties can marry
> However, the *shastra* says no to a child widow's marriage
> Oh society, your dues for punishment are imminent
> For committing such crimes.
> You can never be excused for punishing your innocent daughters.[48]

[46] Fakir Mohan Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 421.
[47] In the short story *Rebati*, he pleaded for women's education. *Madha Mahantinka Kanya Suna*, another short story, dealt with the complex issues of child marriage and old widowers' remarriage. *Dhulia Baba* focused on superstitions. See, Senapati, *Galpasalpa*, two parts, Cuttack, 1987 (3rd edition).
[48] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 424.

The social ills were attributed to the shastras and religious institutions dominated by undeserving people. Krishna Prasad Choudhury suggested that people with intellect and clarity, even if they were Sudras by caste, must take over religious institutions.[49] Fakir Mohan, whose ire against the Puri priests was more than apparent, defined the shastras and purans as nothing but old tales created for public education in the past. They needed re-interpretation and rewriting for reforming and educating contemporary society.[50] Gopal Chandra Praharaj, who was equally vocal about reforms, stressed that only true education could make reforms possible. Any hasty step like government intervention would be counter-productive, he warned. It was his profound belief that "we must overcome the evils ourselves".[51]

The intellectuals' concern for reforms and love for rational thought brought them closer to the emerging Brahmo Movement. In 1867–68, Balasore became the hotbed of the Brahmo Movement, which was seen as a religion based on rational thoughts and different from Hinduism, and the 'new Brahmos' were Fakir Mohan and his friends such as Damodar Das, Govind Das, Jaykrishna Choudhury, Radhanath Ray and Bholanath Basu. Many of them, especially Fakir Mohan and Radhanath Ray, once even resolved to convert to Brahmos but were dissuaded because of the existing social pressure.[52] In 1870, Haranath Bhattacharya and in 1872 Prasanna K. Ganguly started branches of the Brahmo Samaj at Balasore and Puri.[53] The movement also influenced other leading intellectuals like Madhusudan Rao, Rama Shankar Ray, Bhikari Charan Patnaik and Biswanath Kar.[54] Consequently, some journals such as the *Sevak* (1883) the *Samskarak* (1884) and the *Utkal Subhankari* (1869) were brought out to suggest reforms on Brahmo lines.[55]

[49] Asit Kabi, *Odiya Prabandha*, p. 62.
[50] Senapati, *Galpasalpa*, Part II, p. 4.
[51] Praharaj, *Bhagabat*, p. 117.
[52] Senapati, *Atmajivana*, pp. 46–47.
[53] N. Samantray, *Odiya Sahityar Itihas*, Bhubaneswar, 1964, p. 35.
[54] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajivani*, Cuttack, 1986, p. 207.
[55] Mahapatra, *Odisara Patra Patrika*, p. 60.

Besides reformatory zeal, it was largely universal monotheism that probably inspired the Orissa intelligentsia to look for the Brahmo alternative. Madhusudan Rao, who along with Pyari Mohan Acharya had set up a place for Brahmo worship at Cuttack in the 1870s, was popularly called the *Bhakta Kabi* (devout poet), for his poetry was based on monotheism and universal brotherhood. The Brahmo influence on his literary genre and his Oriya Hindu identity went side by side.[56] He did pray to *Brahmandeswar* (god of the universe) on behalf of the *jagadbasi* (all people living in the world), but this did not clash with his prayer to the *Pabitra Bharata Bhumi* (pious land of Bharat) or his clarion call to the people of Utkal to come out of their present state of pessimism.[57]

I.d

The period also witnessed the formation of a few clubs and associations with the objective of bringing educated people together for discussing social issues at public platforms. And so, the Cuttack Youngmen's Association (1869), Cuttack College Students' Association (1882), the Orissa Graduates and Under Graduates Association (1888), the Puri Students' Association (1882), Alochana Sabha, Cuttack (1893) and the Cuttack Debating Club (1868) came to be formed.[58] Many of these associations were short-lived and failed to make any sustained effort to bring about any social change. Further, their debates and discussions hardly went beyond their closed circles.[59] Nevertheless, the growth of such forums marked the beginning of a new era in which the newly educated middle class would appropriate the issue of social development. The realization that the conditions were depressing and the society

[56] Mishra, ed., *MSG*, pp. 25, 43.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 247.
[58] Kar, *Indian National Congress*, p. 21.
[59] Praharaj's *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya* (1900) first serialized in the *Utkal Sahitya* in the 1890s, centres around such a village discussion forum in which, barring a few, the members make frivolous remarks on social issues and reforms. Similarly, Fakir Mohan ridiculed such youngsters for whom discussion on social issues was merely fashionable and lacked sincerity for social reforms. Senapati, *Galpasalpa*, p. 69.

vulnerable to "evil" influences, prompted the educated and half-educated middle class to initiate reforms at its own level. This sense of self-help as well as their efforts at articulation gradually saw this class emerge as the representative force of the local socio-political scenario. Probably the emergence of nationalism in nineteenth century Orissa under the auspices of the intelligentsia could be attributed to this.

II

Language provided the base for the emergence of regional as well as nationalist consciousness in Orissa. The people, particularly the intellectuals, resisted Oriya being replaced or dominated by other neighbouring languages and people. In central Orissa, it was felt that Oriya was being threatened with domination by Bengali on the grounds that it was only a variant of Bengali. In 1872, one Kanti Chandra Bondopadhyaya, a Bengali working as a teacher at Balasore, wrote a booklet, *Odiya Ek Swatantra Bhasa Naye* (Oriya is not a distinct language) where he argued that Oriya was a mere dialect of Bengali. Before this, in 1870, the deputy inspector of schools, a Bengali from Balasore, had reportedly recommended the displacement of Oriya from schools.[60] In south Orissa, then a part of the Madras Presidency, Oriya was neither used in offices, nor taught in schools.[61] In western Orissa, which had been attached to the Central Provinces since 1862, the chief commissioner declared in 1895 that Oriya would be replaced by Hindi to facilitate the transfer of officials within the state. The government felt that the use of Oriya as the official language in parts of the Central Provinces created administrative problems, which could be solved by replacing it with Hindi.[62]

Besides language, in terms of education, employment, trade and business as well, the Oriyas lagged behind their neighbours and

[60] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 675; Pradhan, *GG*, p. 39.
[61] *Sevak*, 15 and 22 December 1886, in *RNNB*, 8 January 1887.
[62] *Sambad Vahika*, 7 February 1895, in *RNNB*, 16 March 1895.

consequently developed an acute sense of subjection and domination. In particular, the feeling of domination by the Bengali élite was more apparent since the growth of the Bengali middle class was far more rapid than that of other neighbouring non-Oriya middle classes. Second, the relatively educationally advanced regions like Cuttack, Puri and Balasore in Orissa, had been responding to Bengali challenges, for they were attached to the Bengal Presidency. The domination looked greater because the local middle class was stronger than its counterparts in other parts of the state. Therefore, the reaction against the perceived domination was also sharper there. Nonetheless, the reaction in other parts was not negligible.

Following the language controversy, Fakir Mohan and the *amla*s of Balasore held meetings and sent a petition to the government against the possible abolition of Oriya from schools.[63] As lack of textbooks in Oriya was cited as a reason for abolishing the language, the intellectuals set out to write textbooks to prove the worth of their language as well as to meet the needs of school education. Madhusudan Rao wrote the *Barnabodh*, a primer on alphabets, while Fakir Mohan wrote a mathematics primer, *Ankamala*. Gangadhar Meher, a great poet himself, translated a few Hindi poems for primary classes. Radhanath wrote books on all subjects, from geography to mathematics, for primary school students. Bichhad Charan Patnaik and Gouri Shankar Ray also wrote textbooks to help overcome the shortage.[64]

To counter the "undermining of linguistic and cultural greatness of Orissa", the intellectuals shaped a glorious past that would sustain their regional identity. Accordingly, Pyari Mohan wrote the *Odisara Itiha*s, Gopal Chandra Acharya wrote *Sri Jagannath O Chaitanya* and Jatindra M. Singh wrote the *Odisar Chitra* and Fakir Mohan wrote the *Bharat Itiha*s with added emphasis on Orissa. These books glorified Orissa and its culture "for the purpose of inspiring the

[63] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 55.
[64] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 1; Singh, *Prachina Utkala*, Part I, p. 2; Pradhan, ed., *GG*, p. 344; Patnaik, *RG*, p. 5.

present".[65] Fakir Mohan described the land of Utkal as the greatest in India, for the *swargadwar* (gateway to heaven) existed here.[66] He listed out the major religious *pitha*s (sacred places) in Utkal and concluded that the founders of different religious sects had been, as if, vying among themselves for a little space in the great land of Utkal.[67] Radhanath, in his epic *Mahayatra* (1896) made the Pandavas turn to Utkal in the course of their final journey to heaven, and wrote, "if all the land will be leaves [of a plant], Utkal is the flower".[68] Similarly, Rama Shankar Ray recalled the greatness of the medieval Orissan empire in his play, *Kanchi Kaveri* (1880–81), in which the Kalinga king, Purushottam Dev, defeated the Vijayanagar king and won over Kanchi.[69]

In south Orissa, this feeling took the shape of an upsurge against the domination of the Telugu middle class.[70] This saw the publication of the *Swadeshi* (1876) from Ganjam and the *Ganjam Odisa Hitabadini* (1899) from Parlekhemundi. A few socio-cultural organizations like the *Ganjam Utkal Hitabadini Sabha* (1881) also came up for sustaining the cultural and linguistic feeling among the local Oriya people. They sent petitions to the government demanding the introduction of Oriya in offices and held meetings to highlight the language issue.[71] In 1886, a protective policy asking for the right to maintain revenue records and to send representations in Oriya for the Oriya-speaking tenants was demanded.[72] The efforts

[65] Jagadbandhu Singh in his *Prachin Utkal* (first written in 1917) wrote about these old manuscripts and discussed their themes in great detail. Out of these Pyari Mohan's *Odisara Itiha*s was written in 1875 and first published in 1879 from Cuttack. Fakir Mohan's *Bharatbarsara Itihas* with several chapters on Orissa was written in 1869. See, Singh, *Prachina Utkala*, Part I, pp. 5–6; J.V. Boulton. *Phakirmohana Senapati*: *His life and Prose Fiction*. Bhubaneswar, 1993, Appendix, p. 529.

[66] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 201.

[67] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 733.

[68] Patnaik, ed., *RG*, p. 204.

[69] Bhabagrahi Mishra, "*Samajika Natakar Adiparva, 1877–1920*", in Kunja Bihari Das, ed., *Adhunika Odia Sahityar Bhumi O Bhumita*, Bhubaneswar, 1972, p. 131.

[70] As late as in 1903, Fakir Mohan complained that out of 120 clerks in the Ganjam Collectorate only three were Oriyas. Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 685.

[71] P. Kar, *Indian National Congress*, p. 21; Pradhan, *GG*, pp. 34–35.

[72] *Sevak*, 15 December 1886, in *RNNB*, 8 January 1887.

resulted in the recognition of Oriya as the official language in Ganjam and as a subject of study in Madras University in 1890.[73]

Compared to the other two parts, western Orissa experienced a more volatile linguistic agitation during the period. Sambalpur, being the main urban centre of the region, became its hotbed. Before the official notification (regarding the replacement of Oriya with Hindi) was made public, Chandra Sekhar Behera, then working as a clerk at Nagpur, broke the news in Sambalpur. Consequently, a meeting was held expressing unhappiness over the proposal on 13 July 1894.[74] The notification was followed by another meeting on 13 June 1895 where a memorandum demanding revocation of the order was drafted. The meeting also resolved to publish the memorandum both in Oriya and English for wider dissemination among the public as well as in the official circle. A few other significant decisions were also taken in the meeting. For example, it was decided that many more branch committees would be formed and signature campaigns for widening the base of the agitation would be undertaken. To meet expenses, funds would be collected from the public, the meeting resolved.[75]

In 1896, Hindi replaced Oriya as the official language for courts in Sambalpur. Court records were to be maintained in Hindi and documents regarding registration of land were to be accepted only in Hindi. In primary schools Hindi was made compulsory class III onwards.[76] Following this, between 1896 and 1901, several meetings were held, memoranda sent and petitions written to restore Oriya in Sambalpur. A delegation also went to Nagpur in 1901 to apprise the government of the situation. Madan Mohan Mishra, Baikuntha Nath Pujari, Balabhadra Supakar, Dharanidhar Mishra and Chandra Sekhar Behera were some of the prominent leaders of the agitation. While highlighting the issue, the press also demanded

[73] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, pp. 23–24.

[74] *SH*, 25 July 1894, in C.R. Mishra, *Freedom Movement in Sambalpur*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 149.

[75] *UD*, 2 February 1895, in C.R. Mishra, *Freedom Movement*, p. 149.

[76] "The Central Provinces Government Education Report, 1898–99", in C.R. Mishra, *Freedom Movement*, p. 166.

the restoration of Oriya in Sambalpur. Or else, it suggested, the region should be amalgamated with the Orissa Division of Bengal Presidency.[77]

On the literary front, a large number of poems and essays were published appealing to the people, especially the influential sections like the princes, zamindars and educated persons, to demand restoration of Oriya in Sambalpur. The lead was taken by Gangadhar Meher, a poet from the locality. Following the order, he wrote the *Bharati Rodana* (The Language Wails) and the *Utkal Bharatinka Nibedana* (Appeal of Utkal Language) and published them in the *Sambalpur Hiteishini*.[78] Fakir Mohan in his poem *Utkal Bhramana* (1892) lamented that Woodburn (the chief commissioner of the Central Provinces, during whose tenure the abolition had been proposed) might be a good administrator otherwise, but had caused immense injury to the people of Orissa.[79] In an essay he described him as a villain in the justice-loving British Empire.[80]

In 1901, the order was revoked and Oriya restored in Sambalpur. The intelligentsia was overwhelmed with joy. The success was, however, attributed to the young chief commissioner (of the Central Provinces), Andrew Frazer, during whose tenure the revocation was actualized. He was profusely praised in the nationalist press, and a club was named after him (Frazer Club) in Sambalpur.[81]

The agitation in Sambalpur was a prelude to the forthcoming Oriya movement for amalgamating the Oriya-speaking tracts under one political administration and subsequently for a separate state. The strategies adopted for this (sending petitions, holding public meetings, involving more and more people in the agitation, publishing agitational literature in the vernacular language and reaching out to the public for raising funds for the movement) showed the growing political maturity of the leadership in Orissa.

[77] *UD*, 30 March 1895, in *RNNB*, 18 May 1895; *UD*, 20 and 27 April and 4 May 1895, in *RNNB*, 8 June 1895; *SH*, 27 February 1901, in *RNNB*, 16 March 1901.
[78] *SH*, 30 October 1894 and 6 March 1896, in Pradhan, ed. *GG*, pp. 438–42.
[79] Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, p. 207.
[80] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 679.
[81] *UD*, 12 July 1902, in *RNNB*, 26 July 1902; *Sambad Vahika*, 17 July 1902, in *RNNB*, 2 August 1902; also see Mishra, *Freedom Movement*, pp. 177–80.

One of the limitations of the leadership was holding an individual official fully responsible for the deed or misdeed of the government. This probably had its roots in the intelligentsia's "feudal" understanding where individual princes or zamindars were believed to be the main and sometimes the only force behind all political decisions. Alternately, there was growing faith in the capacity of the common people, which ultimately led to the waning of such feudal thinking. This was subtly apparent in the language agitation too, especially in Sambalpur. The two divergent forms adopted here—on the one hand appealing to the "high classes" and holding individual British officials responsible and, on the other, launching signature campaigns and disseminating agitational literature in the vernacular language—marked the transition in Orissa politics.

Another notable outcome of the language agitation was the apparent unity among the Oriya intellectuals. The role of Madhusudan Das, a pleader and leader from Cuttack, was considered so pivotal that the Sambalpur leaders unanimously nominated him to represent the constituency of Orissa municipalities in the Central Legislative Council, at a meeting in Sambalpur in 1896.[82] Similarly, the *UD* and the *Sambad Vahika* along with other newspapers from Cuttack wholeheartedly espoused the cause of the agitation. Such close coordination among the intelligentsia of different regions broadened the scope for the rise of a political Orissa as an integral part of a greater India.

III

The emergence of a few socio-political organizations was a significant development of the post-famine period. It provided a forum for common discussions and helped in the growth of some kind of common understanding on various issues among the intelligentsia. Notable among these organizations were the National Society of Balasore (1878), the *Utkal Sabha* of Cuttack (1882) and

[82] *UD*, 22 February1896, in K.M. Patra and B. Devi., *An Advanced History of Orissa*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 193.

the *Utkal Heteishini Sabha* of Parlakhemundi (1881). Till the formation of the UUC in 1903, these organizations worked as the nerve centre of different socio-political activities in their respective regions in the state. Their association with the newspapers like the *Sambad Vahika*, the *UD*, the *Utkal Darpan* and the *Swadeshi* gave them added strength and recognition. Besides, there were other newspapers such as the *Samskaraka*, the *Sevak*, the *Oriya O Navasambad* (OONS), *Gadjat Basini* and the *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (SH), behind whom there were other groups of intellectuals.

At times, the intelligentsia, the associations and the newspapers and journals converged with one another. Hence, seeing them as a broad team does not seem unreasonable. Their collective efforts and meaningful interactions resulted in the holding of meetings, sending of petitions and memoranda to the government and deputation of delegates to all-Indian associations such as the Indian National Congress (INC). Besides, this also led to the publication of creative literature including poetry, novels, dramas, essays and short stories most of which reflected the socio-political realities of the time. In the absence of a recognized political party and movement, these writings including reports in the press, played the role of an opposition in matters related to day-to-day administration.

On the economic front, the intelligentsia drew the attention of the government to the growing poverty of the people. This was attributed to high taxation, decline of native industries like salt manufacture and shipping in the coastal areas and poor salary to low-level officials, among other things.[83] Even the decline of interest in the vernacular was linked with the general poverty for "people cannot afford to buy books" Fakir Mohan wrote in 1913.[84] The *Oriya O Navasambad* wrote in 1895 that the main reason for the decrease in the consumption of salt was poverty in Balasore District. Due to extreme poverty, ordinary meals were becoming simpler,

[83] Details are to be found in *RNNB* of the years 1868–1900.
[84] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 744.

and elaborate meals served on marriages and festivals less sumptuous. As a result, the consumption of every article, including salt decreased, the paper concluded.[85] As early as 1886, the *Sevak* questioned the wisdom of those countrymen, "who were under the impression that Indian people were making general material progress under the British government".[86] The *Navasambad* criticized the provision of municipal tax on kerosene, an essential commodity for the poor.[87] The *UD* described the pilgrim tax as an extra burden on pilgrims, "who were not necessarily rich" and whose "troubles and distresses were more than enough".[88]

The decline of the native salt industry worried the intelligentsia as it resulted in the loss of employment for a large number of people in the coastal regions.[89] "What a pity that we must look up to Liverpool for our salt? What can illustrate the misfortune of India more than this?" the *UD* asked.[90] "No humane government having the least affection for its subjects would adopt a cruel measure calculated to deprive a large number of men of their living", commented the *Samskaraka.*[91] The intelligentsia's main worry was that the people losing employment due to the destruction of the indigenous salt industry could not be absorbed into the workforce because of the import of salt. The *UD* challenged, "if the government feels that Liverpool salt was profitable [as a business to the people] let it prepare and employ the people in the way as the [local] *ponga* salt had done".[92]

"Over expenditure on defence",[93] high salary of the viceroy and the members of his executive council,[94] the system of taxation by

[85] *Oriya O Navasambad* (*OONS*), 16 October 1895, in *RNNB*, 30 November 1895.
[86] *Sevak*, 15 and 22 December 1886, in *RNNB*, 8 January 1887.
[87] *OONS*, 4 September 1895, in *RNNB*, 26 October 1895.
[88] *UD*, 10 February 1868, in *RNNB*, 22 February 1868.
[89] *UD*, 21 September 1895, in *RNNB*, 9 November 1895; *Sambad Vahika*, 22 December 1887, in *RNNB*, 21 January 1888.
[90] *UD*, 3 December 1887, in *RNNB*, 7 January 1888.
[91] *Samskaraka*, 29 December 1887, in *RNNB*, 21 January 1888.
[92] *UD*, 17 December 1887, in *RNNB*, 21 January 1888.
[93] "Frontier defences were great enemies of Indian people" wrote *UD*, 21 April 1888, in *RNNB*, 19 May 1888.
[94] *UD*, 9 June 1885, in *RNNB* (undated), 1885.

which “the interests of Indian people had been subordinated to those of English manufacturers, who would have otherwise raised a hue and cry in the English Parliament in the name of free trade”,[95] and “poor salary to the *amlas*” and ministerial staff, “despite the phenomenal rise in the cost of living”[96] were some other issues that bothered the intelligentsia. As a way out, it was suggested that, “the natives must be given the power to check the waste of public money”.[97]

On the political front, the press argued that people’s loyalty to the government was of little value because it never ceased to suspect their loyalty. The Arms Act of 1878, which literally rendered the people “helpless and defenceless”[98] had reportedly exemplified it. Poor enrolment of natives at higher levels of military service and no position of responsibility for Indian princes in the military department also proved that the British did not trust the local people, the press argued.[99] The intelligentsia urged the government to repeal the Arms Act and to give responsibility to Indians in the military department, “otherwise distrust would breed distrust in its turn”.[100]

The intellectuals were also forthright in their comments on issues related to administration. They demanded Indianization of public services, as it would reduce the cost of administration and generate confidence among the natives and make them feel that they had the capacity to rule themselves.[101] It was also suggested that the judiciary be given more power[102] and recruitments made in public service through both nomination and competition, because “nomination alone leads to favouritism and misuse of patronage and power”, and “free and open competition alone without reference

[95] *Samskaraka*, 7 April 1887, in *RNNB*, 23 April 1887.
[96] *Samskaraka*, 14 April 1887, in *RNNB*, 30 April 1887.
[97] *UD*, 21 April 1888, in *RNNB*, 19 May 1888.
[98] *Sevak*, 18 and 22 December 1886, in *RNNB*, 8 January 1887.
[99] *OONS*, 7 August 1895, in *RNNB*, 14 September 1895.
[100] *Sevak*, 18 and 22 December 1886, in *RNNB*, 8 January 1887.
[101] *Samskaraka*, 17 March 1887, in *RNNB*, 9 April 1887.
[102] In contrast, the government was accused of “trying to lower the prestige of the judiciary—a policy always wrought with evil and danger”. *UD*, 23 March 1895, in *RNNB*, 27 April 1895.

to local usages, social status and other considerations, is equally mischievous".[103] The three main organizations, the *Utkal Sabha*, the National Society and the *Utkal Hiteishini Sabha*, had been regularly interacting with nationalist forums like the Indian Association (1883), the All India National Conference (1885) and subsequently with the INC. From 1886 onwards, they sent delegates to the annual sessions of the Congress quite regularly.[104]

The delegates were usually nominated by the various *sabha*s. They had to bear their own travel expenses, because of which not many people applied for nomination. While before the Congress sessions the *sabha*s put forward suggestions to be taken up by the all-India body, on the delegates' return (from the Congress) meetings were regularly organized to felicitate the delegates and to discuss the Congress resolutions at length.[105]

The Oriya intellectuals' perception of the Congress in the 1890s gets a creative mention in Gopal Chandra Praharaj's *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya*. A few educated youth arrived in the village with a message from the Congress emphasizing on unity among countrymen. The villagers were moved by the youth who informed the people that Congress literature was available in Oriya at the Utkal Sahitya Press (Cuttack) at a very nominal cost.[106]

While lending support, the intellectuals knew that the Congress did not represent the masses. Still, they asserted that it represented educated India, the intelligent "souls" of the country who "guide,

[103] *Samskaraka*, 31 March 1887, in *RNNB*, 23 April 1887.
[104] Baikuntha Nath De of the National Society attended the Calcutta Congress (1886), Madhusudan Das and Gouri Shankar Ray of the *Utkal Sabha* attended the Allahabad Congress (1888). In 1890, Janakinath Bose of the *Utkal Sabha*, in 1895 five delegates from the *Utkal Hiteishini Sabha* and in 1901 four delegates from the *Utkal Sabha* and five from the National Society attended the Congress. Report on Indian National Congress (see Rep. on INC Proceedings) 1886–1901, delegates list (Access no. 1433–38, Microfilm, National Archives of India (NAI) Delhi.
[105] The *UD* press complex served the purpose of a hall on such occasions. *Samskaraka*, 2 February 1888, in *RNNB*, 18 February 1888; *UD*, *OONS*, both of 15 December 1894, in *RNNB*, 12 January 1895; *Samskaraka*, 7 April 1887, in *RNNB*, 23 April 1887.
[106] Praharaj, *Bhagabat*, pp. 115–18.

protect and consolidate" the rights and interests of the people.[107] Their jubilant association with the Congress explains the latter's emergence as an all-India forum within a short span of time. It also shows a spontaneous urge among the regional intelligentsia to come together on a broad national platform. The timely formation of the Congress in 1885 only served this purpose.

IV

On 30 and 31 December 1903, when the annual session of the Congress was being held in Madras, the intellectuals of Orissa met in Cuttack and formed an organization called the *Utkal Sammilani*, or the UUC. Presided over by the prince of Mayurbhanj, Sriram Chandra Bhanjdeo, and "graced" by the commissioner of Orissa, K.G. Gupta, the conference thanked the government for its policy on territorial redistribution though the Congress "viewed it with deep concern" at Madras. Further, the conference decided to remain above "all politics" at a time when hectic political activities were on to popularize the Congress movement.[108] The aim of the conference was to primarily look after the interests of Orissa, especially the issue of the union of Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration. According to the conference sources, more than 2,000 people, including 335 delegates from the outlying Oriya-speaking tracts (Sambalpur, Ganjam and Medinipur) attended it and resolved to strive for unity among the Oriya people.[109]

The formation of the UUC, a movement for the linguistic and cultural identity of the Orissa people, appears to have developed in opposition to the ideas of the INC. Regional consciousness for a moment seemed to have overlapped the nationalist consciousness

[107] *Samskaraka*, 15 December 1887, in *RNNB*, 7 January 1888.
[108] *UD*, 2 January 1904, in *RNNB*, 16 January 1904.
[109] *Ibid.*

of the intelligentsia.[110] But the reality was not so simplistic. Both, the feeling for local linguistic and cultural identity and the sentiments for India as well as against British rule, seemed to have grown simultaneously in Orissa often by complementing each other. At times there were tensions, but they were not due to any mutual opposition. Rather, they were due to many other local conditions that need elaboration and explanation at considerable length.

While participating in the Congress, the Orissa leadership fully realized that the cultural and linguistic issues as well as the issue of the union of Orissa, mostly attributed to "the influx of a large population of foreigners"[111] could be taken up only by a regional forum, rather than by the Congress until the issues assumed the proportion of a national concern.[112] The Congress' policy of not taking up any local issue which did not have country-wide impact also necessitated such local and provincial formations.

Constrained by the limits of the Congress, Madhusudan Das, widely known as Mr Das and Madhu Babu, contacted some nationalists such as S.N. Banerjee from Bengal to convene a Bengal Provincial Conference. The objective would be to take up issues of regional importance at a provincial platform. When the idea received a positive response, the *Utkal Sabha* held a public meeting to welcome the move in early October 1888. There Mr Das explained that the conference was meant for local issues, while the Congress would take up national issues.[113] Thus, the two associations—the Bengal Provincial Conference and the Congress—would be complementing each other.

[110] The theory that regional consciousness in Orissa was poised against nationalist consciousness, has found advocates in Nivedita Mohanti, *Oriya Nationalism Quest for a United Orissa, 1866–1936*, New Delhi, 1982; P. Kar, *Indian National Congress*, p. 65; K.M. Patra et al., *History of Orissa* and in many others. D. Rothermund, writing the Foreword for Mohanti, believed it to be an upsurge for emancipation from a dominant and much stronger neighbour rather than from British rule.

[111] Besides the British, "the foreigners" included the neighbouring middle class, as shown earlier. Senapati, *FMG*, Part I, pp. 201–202; Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, p. 17.

[112] *UD*, 9 April 1888, in *RNNB*, 28 April 1888.

[113] *UD*, 6 October 1888, in *RNNB*, 10 November 1888.

In 1888, the first session of the Provincial Conference was held in Bengal. Various *sabha*s sent their delegates. The Orissa delegates in the subsequent sessions of the conference were so jubilant that in 1901, a proposal was put forward to hold the session in Cuttack.[114] But such intense relations could not be sustained for long. In the proposed Orissa session, delegates from the outlying non-Bengal tracts—Ganjam and Sambalpur—would not be allowed to join. They were Oriya-speaking, but did not belong to the Bengal Presidency. The Provincial Conference could not invite people beyond the provincial boundary. On the other hand, the Orissa intellectuals feared that the amalgamation issue could not gain strength without the involvement of people from different Oriya-speaking tracts. This resulted in a rift between the Orissa intellectuals and the leaders of the conference, leading to the intellectuals' withdrawal from the conference. Then on, new alternatives were examined.[115]

Another reason behind the search for an Orissa-level platform was the government's proposal on territorial redistribution. In 1903, the government mooted a proposal, which on implementation would have led to the amalgamation of nearly all Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration. The proposal stipulated that considering "the race, language, administrative convenience and territorial integrity", Sambalpur with five adjoining Oriya feudatory states (of the Central Provinces), Orissa division and a part of the Singhbhum district of Chhotnagpur division (of Bengal Presidency) and the Ganjam district, Ganjam agency and Vizagpatam agency tracts (of Madras Presidency) should be amalgamated together to form a homogenous unit within the Bengal Presidency.[116] The proposal was welcomed in the Orissa circle, for the government

[114] *UD*, 13 July 1901, in *RNNB*, 27 July 1901.
[115] *UD*, 18 April 1903, in *RNNB*, May 1903.
[116] Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department to the Government of Bengal, No. 3678, dated 3 December 1903, *Home Political Proceedings*, No. 149, 16 December 1903; *UD*, 26 December 1903, in *RNNB*, 9 January 1904.

planned to bring "the whole of the Oriya-speaking people, both from the hills and the plains, under one administration".[117]

The proposal, however, did not find favour in the Congress circles. Matters came to a head when the Madras Congress of 1903 hotly debated the issue and finally rejected the official proposal. While moving a resolution against the proposed territorial redistribution, J. Choudhury of Bengal said: "This Congress views with deep concern the present policy of the government of India in breaking up territorial divisions which have been of long standing and are closely united by ethnological, legislative, social and administrative relations and the Congress deprecates… the separation of the District of Ganjam and the agency tracts of the Ganjam and Vizagpatam Districts from the Madras Presidency".[118]

G. Raghava Rao, while seconding the resolution, said that Oriyas living in Madras Presidency were not a minority and were getting special attention and privileges for being a backward class. Second, the proposed transfer would create problems for the Telugus in the Ganjam areas, whereas the Oriyas were there under Madras administration for over a century and a half and were used to it. "There was no complaint from them", he added. [119]

But the resolution opposing the proposal of transfer was not supported by all present in the Congress session. For example, V. Krishna Swami Iyer strongly objected to the passing of the resolution on "issues involving people with considerable differences of opinion". The Oriyas were anxious to be with Orissa, whereas the Telugus of Ganjam were opposed to this. On such matters, the "Congress should not be invited to pronounce its opinion", he pointed out and moved an amendment to the resolution. The amendment was, however, rejected and the original resolution was passed by the Congress.[120]

[117] While referring to the Risely Circular, Rebatikanta Ghosh mentioned it on 25 November 1921, in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council Proceedings (B&OLCP), Vol. III, p. 168.
[118] *Rep. on INC Proceedings*, 1903, p. 128.
[119] *Ibid*., p. 130
[120] *Ibid*., p. 133.

The Orissa delegates (five in number in 1903) could not or did not speak out in the open session, though they might have done so in private or in the subjects' session, nor did they approve of the passing of the resolution.[121] Their return from the Congress session (in 1903) symbolized their return to the regional forum for pursuing Orissa-related issues. The result: formation of the UUC.

However, preparations for convening the UUC had been on much before the Madras Congress session. In January 1903, Mr Das mooted the idea at a meeting of the princes, zamindars and educated persons, who in turn gave him the responsibility to actualize it.[122] Due to similar efforts and insistence, a *Jatiyo Samiti* was convened in south Orissa in April 1903. The organizers were Harihar Panda, Sribatsa Panda, the prince of Khalikote, Balaram Maharana, Parasuram Patra and a few others. After the formation of the UUC, the *Samiti* merged with it in December 1903.[123]

The establishment of the UUC did not lead to any immediate break in its relations with the Congress, nor did it amount to Orissa's withdrawal from broad national politics. In 1903 itself, the *Utkal Sabha*, a forerunner of the UUC, sent delegates to the Congress.[124] After the Madras session, the *UD*, the unofficial organ of the UUC, enthusiastically reported that the Congress movement was becoming firm day by day.[125] The theme song of the UUC since its formation in 1903 was called *Bharat Gitika* (song of India). Specially composed by Radhanath Ray for the purpose it declared, "India! Thou art the mother of us all …".[126] In 1907, Madhusudan Das, the main architect of the UUC, hosted a public reception for the Orissa delegates who had attended the Calcutta Congress in 1906,[127] "the largest of its kind ever held in India".[128]

[121] As the *Report in the INC Proceedings*, 1903 show none of the Oriya delegates spoke there (Access no. 1435, Microfilm, NAI); Also see P.K. Mishra, "Growth of Oriya Nationalism—1868–1921", in B.S. Das, ed., *Glimpses of Orissa*, Calcutta, 1986, p. 234.
[122] *UD*, 14 March 1903, in P. Kar, *Indian National Congress*, p. 50.
[123] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, pp. 24–25.
[124] *UD*, 19 December 1903, in *RNNB*, 2 January 1904.
[125] *UD*, 16 January 1904, in *RNNB*, 30 January 1904.
[126] Patnaik, ed, *RG*, p. 30.
[127] *UD*, January 1907 in *RNNB*, 2 February 1907.
[128] *UD*, 29 December 1906, in *RNNB*, 12 January 1907.

Besides, the concept of “mother India” got adequate space in other contemporary literature too. The lead was taken by Radhanath who declared, “our mother India, the mine of invaluable jewels, the pious land, is unparallel as a country”.[129] In a similar vein, his literary disciple, Madhusudan Rao wrote, “you India, the pious land, my mother land; we all your children, at your feet, promise to sacrifice our lives in your service”.[130] While defining the inter-linkages between the country and its regions, Fakir Mohan compared India to a *tanpura* (a musical instrument) and its regions with the innumerable strings of the instrument. The former is not effective without the latter and the latter has no identity without the former, he argued passionately. This explains the intelligentsia’s understanding of the complexities and the inter-dependence between the two, that is, the nation and the region.[131]

The split within the Congress in 1907 and the prohibitory order on the use of the song *Bande Mataram (Vande Mataram),* reflected the Orissa intelligentsia’s empathy for the Congress and its brand of nationalism. While some leaders blamed the extremists and their leader Balgangadhar Tilak,[132] many others held both the nationalist groups responsible for the split.[133] To a few others, it was a shame on the part of all Indians who “became objects of laughter before the whole world”.[134]

In December 1906, the *UD* was sad to note that the slogan, *Bande Mataram,* was in the bad books of the Englishmen.[135] When the lieutenant governor of Bengal and Assam revoked the prohibitory order on the slogan, the paper not only welcomed the news, but also urged the people to say *Bande Mataram* in place of *salaam, namaste* and all other forms of traditional greetings. “That would be a fitting reply to those Englishmen, who disliked the slogan”, it

[129] Patnaik, ed., *RG*, p. 389.
[130] Anant Mishra, ed., *MSG*, p. 12.
[131] Senapati, *FMG,* Part II, p. 742.
[132] *UD,* 4 January 1908, in *RNNB*, 8 February 1908.
[133] *Nilachal Samachar,* 3 January 1908, in *RNNB,* 8 February 1908.
[134] *OONS*, 1 January 1908, in *RNNB*, 8 February 1908.
[135] *UD,* 30 December 1905, in *RNNB*, 13 January 1906.

concluded.[136] In fact, the official prohibition had its counter effect on the popular mind. A man in Bangiriposi (near Baripada) reportedly shouted *Bande Mataram* to chide the police superintendent, an Englishmen, and incurred the wrath of the local authorities in December 1905.[137]

However, after 1903, the intelligentsia's reactions to the national movement and the Congress was not uniform. Another section of the intelligentsia, which was equally influential and experienced, was broadly opposed to the national movement, the Congress and its confrontationist programmes such as "the boycott" and the "Anti-Partition Movement" and the like.[138]

Represented by a press known for its regularity and led by the "high" class, this section believed that the Congress and its programme, "which were distasteful to the authorities",[139] were the brainchild of some "Bengali" élites who were "indifferent and unsympathetic to Orissa".[140] It urged the people (of Orissa) to remain aloof because the "Oriyas could never hope to expect any good by joining these movements".[141] They even objected to the use of the slogan *Bande Mataram* at the UUC session in 1908.[142]

The two sections of intellectuals represented two divergent political trends in the state—the liberals, whose empathy for the Congress was conspicuous, and the loyalists, who comprised many princes and zamindars. The second trend was represented by newspapers like the *Utkal Darpan*, the *Sambalpur Hiteishini* and the *Gadjat Basini*. The third trend of "moderate nationalists" was still to come. This ultimately happened in the first decade of the twentieth century. In other words, while the "loyalists" opposed the Congress and preached loyalty to the British, the "moderate nationalists", the youngest of all, argued for the convergence of the UUC with the Congress. The "liberals", on the other hand, placed

[136] *UD*, 19 May 1906, in *RNNB*, 2 June 1906; *UD*, 26 May 1906, in *RNNB*, 9 June 1906.
[137] *Monorama*, 18 December 1905, in *RNNB*, 13 January 1906.
[138] *SH*, 10 January 1906, in *RNNB*, 3 March 1906.
[139] *Ibid*.
[140] *UD*, 29 January 1906, in *RNNB*, 17 February 1906.
[141] *UD*, 12 March 1906, in *RNNB*, 31 March 1906.
[142] *OONS*, 22 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 23 May 1908.

in a dilemma, vacillated between these two trends. Initially the liberals' critique of the government was guarded and covert. It often grew under the shade of a complex creative milieu and could evade the wrath of the authorities. Its identification with the Congress was also not expectantly open. Though the attitude changed later on, it was so slow and halting that the moderate nationalists even doubted the formers' sincerity. This created apparent rifts between the two which sometimes even forced the liberals to tilt towards the loyalists. The UUC as an amalgam of all the three trends was a witness to the intense struggle between them all during 1903–20.[143]

Despite interaction with the Congress, the liberals adopted a policy which was "lukewarm" in regard to the Congress and the national movement after 1903. On the other hand, their relations with the loyalists apparently continued unhindered. As a result, they failed to contain the growing nationalist and anti-colonial tendencies of the early twentieth century. Their failure to best represent these tendencies gave rise to the moderate nationalists who ultimately hijacked the Orissa issue and became the representative force of the Congress in Orissa.

In the early years, the loyalists dominated the UUC.[144] The liberals succumbed to their pressure despite criticizing the British rule and having a broad understanding of nationalism. As a result, in 1908, the UUC could pass a resolution preventing the use of *Bande Mataram* in its sessions. While presiding over the UUC, the Parikud prince differentiated it from all "politics", by which he meant the nationalist politics of the Congress.[145] The Congress was accused of having "disregarded the claims of smaller nationalities

[143] The terms "loyalists", "liberals" and "moderate nationalists" are used for the convenience of our analysis. They may be understood in the context they have been referred to, and not in any other context.

[144] Until 1912, only the *gadjat* princes and zamindars presided over the UUC. They also headed the prestigious reception committee of the organization. However, these were ceremonial positions. They reflect the domination of a particular group in the emerging socio-cultural movement in the state. See, Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, Appendix F, pp. 328–34.

[145] *OONS*, 22 April 1908 and *UD*, 25 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 23 May 1908.

in the interest of larger ones".[146] The *Sambad Vahika*, which subscribed to the liberal view, criticized the Congress leaders as "misguided reformers" and "false prophets", who were "blind to the manifold blessings which Britain conferred on India".[147]

The liberals' "not so intimate" relationship with the Congress was construed as general apathy by moderate nationalists. Liberal leaders were undermined as "self-proclaimed leaders" and as "a handful of sycophants". At times they were not differentiated from the loyalists. Further, the moderate nationalists described the UUC policy ("of general apathy and loyalty to the British government") as that of "mendicancy" and "begging" which was destined to achieve "nothing" for the state and the people.[148]

The moderate nationalists, thus, rose as a reaction to the liberal politics in the region. Their growth coincided with the decline of, and disillusionment with, the liberals. The nationalist space was gradually occupied by the moderate nationalists. The two developments—the decline of the liberals and the rise of the moderate nationalists—went on simultaneously for sometime. Ultimately, it culminated in the taking over of the UUC by the latter at the Chakradharpur Session in 1920. As the change was not sudden and was preceded by immemorable developments, it greatly added to the strength of the moderate nationalists.

Working within the broad UUC framework, the moderate nationalists had been making efforts for a more meaningful and close relation with the nationalists outside Orissa, particularly with the INC. The liberals' "not very intimate" relations with the Congress could not satisfy them. The Congress was fast becoming an all-India movement and was taking a confrontationist attitude toward the government. This was explicit in the Anti-Partition and the Boycott movements of 1906. Because of their internal dilemma, the liberals and the mainstream UUC, instead of coming closer to the Congress, had started drifting away from it during this time.

[146] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, p. 31.
[147] *Sambad Vahika*, 12 March 1908, in *RNNB*, 18 April 1908.
[148] *UD*, 25 April 1908 and *OONS*, 29 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 30 May 1908.

The liberals supported the *swadeshi* idea because it was essential "for the industrial development of the country";[149] they advised the peasantry to "grow cotton at a large scale".[150] But at the same time, they opposed the "boycott" of foreign goods because the "time had not arrived to manage business with the help of indigenous means and appliances".[151] They desired the Congress to grow fast, but opposed the idea of "boycott" and even the slogan *Bande Mataram*, as they had their origin in the Anti-Partition Movement in Bengal, in which the "Oriyas were not personally interested".[152]

This dilemma was deep-rooted in the politics of the liberals. It was a reality which did not perfectly fit into the growing nationalist feeling of the moderate nationalists who strongly opposed the attitude of the liberals. The moderate nationalists participated in the Boycott and Anti-Partition movements against the wishes of the liberals.[153] The attitude adopted by the UUC in 1908 was criticized. The *Navasambad*, which was more critical of the government than other newspapers of the time, pointed out, in 1908, a series of "defects" in the UUC position. It criticized the UUC for adopting a "begging" policy to solve problems, for working independently of the INC and for prohibiting the use of *Bande Mataram*. On the contrary, it pointedly demanded a ban on the use of foreign cloth in the conference *pandal*.[154] An anonymous letter published in the *UD* also criticized the UUC leadership for prohibiting the use of *Bande Mataram* as a slogan in 1908, for not being able to establish any relation with the INC and because the UUC was "loyal" to the core. It described the UUC leaders as a "handful of sycophants" and criticized them for having achieved nothing because of their loyalty.[155] Madhusudan Das, the supposedly unchallenged leader of the UUC, hence of Orissa, was

[149] *SH*, 10 February 1906, in *RNNB*, 3 March 1906.
[150] *UD*, 29 December 1906, in *RNNB*, 12 January 1907.
[151] *Ibid*.
[152] *Sambad Vahika*, 7 May 1908, in *RNNB*, 13 June 1908.
[153] Godavarish Mishra, *Ardhasatabdir Odisa O Tahinre Mo Sthana* (autobiography), Cuttack, 1958, p. 69.
[154] *OONS*, 29 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 30 May 1908.
[155] *UD*, 25 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 30 May 1908.

severely criticized by the *Navasambad* for "he was not straightforward and steadfast in his principles as well as in his conduct".[156]

In later years, the criticism of the UUC and its liberal and loyalist leadership further increased thereby sharpening the differences between them and the emerging moderate nationalists. In 1917, Jadumani Mangaraj, a young leader from Cuttack, pointedly attacked Madhusudan Das and, along with many other young volunteers, walked out of the hall just before the beginning of the UUC annual session.[157] However, the timely arrival of a band of "*Satyavadi*"[158] students, whose mentors formed the core of moderate nationalists, saved the situation (the role of volunteers being quite crucial in the management of the conference sessions). But the development further strengthened the position of the young moderate nationalists in the organization. The teachers and students of *Satyavadi* worked as volunteers during the conference and Gopabandhu Das as their spokesman vehemently criticized the British attitude towards the Orissa issue in the midst of liberals and loyalists.[159]

In 1918, the moderate nationalists equated the role of the UUC leadership with that of the government with regard to the miseries of the state. In the annual conference, Gopabandhu appealed to the people to think beyond the interests of Orissa. Chandra Sekhar Behera, who had earlier initiated the linguistic agitation in Sambalpur, was another moderate nationalist who questioned the effectiveness of the UUC's polices. This because Orissa's neighbours had taken a longer leap under the British administration because of their confrontationist attitude, while Orissa continued to stagnate during the period.[160] The liberals' attitude towards the British, and the young moderate nationalists' wrath got well articulated in the writings of Harekrishna Mahatab, then a young

[156] *OONS*, 11 November 1908, in *RNNB*, 26 December 1908.
[157] S.C. Das, *Pandit Gopabandhu*: *A Political Biography*, Cuttack, 1964, p. 88.
[158] Nilakantha Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 139.
[159] Sriramchandra Dash, Gopalbandhu Das (Oriya Biography), New Delhi, 1994, pp. 52–53.
[160] See, Mohanti, *Oriya Nationalism*, p. 64.

UUC volunteer and a strong supporter of the moderates. Introspecting on the mood of 1918, he wrote that he had never heard anything on Indian nationalism from Madhusudan Das; the unification of Orissa and attack on alleged Bengali domination were the only politics of UUC then.[161]

The liberals' (and the loyalists') parochial approach, especially towards the Bengalis, was another reason why the students and the youth (they formed the base of the moderate nationalists) were disenchanted with liberal politics. It was an open secret that the Orissa (union) Movement, while fighting for linguistic and cultural identity, had been tainted with a kind of narrow parochial feeling. This was evident from the fact that the *Navasambad*, brought out by a domiciled Bengali was condemned as the paper of "Kaligali" (used in a derogatory sense for Bengal) and accused of not being faithful to Orissa.[162] Such parochial arguments got open support from the loyalists[163] who were otherwise known for their chauvinistic feelings and preferred the rule by British officers' to the rule by "Bengali" and "Marathi" officers.[164]

Fakir Mohan's ire against the "Bengali", *Pathan* and the "Marathas" had been so conspicuous that, as late as in 1917, he equated them with the Pindari highlanders and wondered "what a great tragedy it would have been, had the all merciful God not sent the British to Orissa in the nineteenth century".[165] However, the anger was not supported by all liberals. One such aberration was poet Madhusudan Rao. During the high days of "anti Bengalism" he longed to see the days, "when people would come out of their narrow shells of "*aadiya Odiya*" [narrow Oriya feelings] and integrate with the league of universal brotherhood".[166]

The young nationalists sharply reacted to such parochialism, without compromising on the Oriya linguistic and cultural issues.

[161] Harekrishna Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe* (autobiography), Cuttack, 1972, p. 22.
[162] *Samskaraka*, 24 February 1887, in *RNNB*, 19 March 1887.
[163] *Sambad Vatika*, 7 May 1908, in *RNNB*, 13 June 1908.
[164] *UD*, 24 February 1906, in *RNNB*, 3 March 1906.
[165] Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, p. 748.
[166] Mishra, *MSG*, p. 188.

As authors they championed the cause of Oriya literature and as committed intellectuals they strove for Oriya identity, and at the same time they aspired for a broad Indian outlook.[167] For example, almost the entire Sambalpur intelligentsia who had been in the forefront of the linguistic agitation in the 1890s geared towards the moderate nationalist ideas in the UUC. Later in 1925, referring to the significance of the linguistic issue, Gopabandhu said that the union of Oriya-speaking tracts was not merely a political problem, but a national and social problem for the people of Orissa. No nationalist politics would be sustained here without internalizing the Orissa issue.[168] Despite these sentiments in 1904, when the UUC decided to allow only Oriya delegates and observers to come to the annual session, Gopabandhu wrote a protest letter to Madhu Babu at whose instance a few Bengali students had been prevented from attending the session.[169] The protest symbolized the beginning of a new trend, that is, moderate nationalism, as opposed to the parochial politics of the loyalists and the liberals in the state.

Many of the young nationalists were probably vocal against parochialism because of their wide social exposure. Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Kripasindhu Mishra and a few others had come in contact with many nationalist leaders of Bengal during the course of their education in Calcutta. Even Harekrishna Mahatab, who had studied at Bhadrak in Balasore District, was critical of parochialism right from his school days because he had been "indoctrinated into nationalism" (seen as an antithesis to parochialism) by his teacher who was a Bengali gentleman. Therefore, the spread of "venom against the Bengalis" was distasteful to him.[170]

Due to the liberals' dependence on the loyalists, the latter exercised an upper hand in UUC politics. This can be substantiated by the fact that between 1903 and 1916, only one liberal

[167] From Gopabandhu Das to Harekrishna Mahatab, most of them were successful writers whose literary genre ranged from poetry, essays, drama and novels to literary translations.
[168] Gopabandhu Das, *Gopbandhu Rachanavali* (*GBR*), Vol. VI, Cuttack, 1978, p. 356.
[169] Das, *Pundit Gopabandhu*, pp. 26–27.
[170] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 10.

(Madhusudan Das) was selected to preside over the UUC session in 1913. At all other sessions, generally the princes and the zamindars presided over and chaired the reception committee.[171] This was largely due to the fact that funds for the movement came from them.[172] Even for self-employment and publication of their writings many of the first-generation educated persons (whom we describe as liberals) sought help from the feudal class.[173] This gave the loyalists a feeling of being indispensable to the Orissa Movement.[174]

In reality, the loyalists, with their parochial attitude, narrow regional outlook and equivocal support to the government "successfully" prevented the UUC from evolving into an overt anti-colonial movement. But more than that, many of the princes and zamindars, who were loyalist intellectuals themselves, resorted to feudal oppression in their respective states and tried to co-opt the intelligentsia, who would have otherwise reacted against such oppression. The late nineteenth century witnessed quite a few local agrarian revolts which intellectuals like Fakir Mohan and Madhusudan Das openly helped suppress. They also liaisoned with the government for absolving the princes and zamindars of all blame.[175]

[171] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, Appendix F, pp. 329–36.
[172] *Ibid*.
[173] Fakir Mohan worked as *dewan* in a number of princely states. From Gangadhar to Radhanath, all the authors acknowledge the receipt of monetary help for publication from the princes and zamindars. For example, see Patnaik, *RG*, p. 191.
[174] *Gadjat Basini*, 2 May 1908, in *RNNB*, 6 June 1908.
[175] Fakir Mohan described, how he and in a few cases, Madhu Babu were instrumental in the suppression of local revolts (Senapati, *Atmajivana*, p. 148). However, the liberals' attitude to the "high" princely class cannot be drawn in a unilinear line. Their dependence on the "high" classes for redressal of grievances was not unexpected in the given situation. But it was not a fixed position for they simultaneously criticized the feudal oppression, which got reflected in their writings, though in a subtle manner. Thus, Radhanath Ray condemned the princes for their "selfishness" in *Durbar* (1897), but showered praise on the Khariar prince for his "dedication to Oriya". See Patnaik, *RG*, pp. 313, 320. Such ambivalence was also apparent in Gangadhar Meher's writings. To him the "high" class appeared so reliable that, his *Bharati* (read Oriya language) wailed before them for redressal of her plight (1895), but in the *Arghyathali* (1918), dedicated to the Puri prince for his "greatness", Meher lamented at society which regards the "oppressors" and "exploiters" (read princes) as an "incarnation of justice". See, Pradhan, *GG*, pp. 254, 438.

The moderate nationalists comprised the second-generation educated class. They had overcome the initial hurdles on which their liberal colleagues had stumbled. Their realization that the feudal elements were of no real help to an anti-colonial movement in which mass involvement was imminent led them to prepare for a movement free from all feudal control.[176]

In their effort to grow independently, some moderate nationalists founded the *Satyavadi* School in 1909 and started two journals, the *Satyavadi* in 1913 and the *Samaj* in 1919. Set in a rural ambience at Sakhigopal Village in the Puri District, the *Satyavadi* was a multi-dimensional experiment. It was a school for developing an alternative model of education, a training centre for nationalist politics, a sort of nationalist media house, which brought out two journals. The monthly *Satyavadi* was dedicated to literature and the *Samaj* to socio-political issues.

The *Satyavadi* also became a main relief centre at the time of floods and other calamities. It was the brainchild of Gopabandhu Das and his young nationalist friends such as Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Harihar Das and Anant Mishra. Popularly known as the *panchasakha* (five friends), this highly-educated group had opted for community work as their mission and formed the core of moderate nationalists in the state.

Their number increased rapidly and their experiments with truth and non-violence and compatibility of means with the ends in public life fetched unfailing praise from many people including the liberals. Started in Orissa in 1909, the *Satyavadi*'s emergence marked a new

[176] In 1906, Gopabandhu Das, Harihar Das and Umacharan Das taught in the Nilagiri High School run by the *gadjat* prince. However, their hope of upgrading the institute into a national school was belied, for the political agent, a British officer, interfered regularly and the prince dared not object. Gopabandhu and his friends left the school very soon in disgust. But the experience there convinced them about the ineffectiveness of feudal help in the building up of a nationalist base. See, Gopabandhu Das, *Gopbandhu Rachanavali* (henceforth *GBR*), Vol. I, Cuttack, 1976, p. 5. Further, as the state lawyer of Mayurbhanj (in 1912), Gopabandhu witnessed the political agent physically assaulting a native. The prince, a leader of the UUC, did not object to such coercive methods. Gopabandhu quit the service in protest. This, however, convinced him that the "high" class lacked the courage to become a part of the anti-colonial (anti-British) movement. See, Das, *Pandit Gopabandhu*, p. 39.

epoch, which was popularly described as the *Satyavadi yug*, not only in the politics, but also in the Oriya literature of modern times.[177]

After its initial "success", the UUC soon began to decline. In 1904, Ganjam could not be transferred to the Orissa Division (of the Bengal Presidency). In 1911, a decision was taken to form a joint province of Bihar and Orissa and the demand for an Orissa union was ignored. The politics of petitions and memoranda failed to fetch justice. The youth were no longer attracted to liberal politics. The liberals gradually became disenchanted with their own politics. They increasingly tended to adopt a more confrontationist stance towards the government and tried to get closer to the Congress. They also viewed the loyalists as a political liability and started drifting away from them.

Referring to the partition of Bengal, which had been welcomed earlier, the *UD* pointed out in December 1905 that it could satisfy neither the people of Orissa nor the people of Bengal. The Oriyas of Ganjam, Phuljhar, Padampur and Khariar (all outlying tracts) were thoroughly disgusted, reported the paper.[178] The UUC had hoped that Ganjam would be transferred soon to Orissa and a memorandum signed by 6,600 people had been sent on 8 January 1904 in this regard. But their hopes were belied.[179]

Referring to the proposal to separate Orissa from Bengal, the *UD* raised strong objections in 1911.[180] After the province was carved out in April 1912, the liberals demanded a separate university for Orissa and a centrally-located high court.[181] In September 1912,

[177] For details see, Bikram Das, *Yugantakari Satyavadi Gurukul*, Bhubaneswar, 2000; Das, *GBR*, 8 Vols, Cuttack, 1976–78; Das, *Atmajivani*. The *Satyavadi* could be seen as a forerunner of *satyagraha* and Gandhian *ashram* of the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience days. The liberals' support for the *Satyavadi* group came in the form of a UUC resolution in 1913. A few months before his death, Fakir Mohan praised "these youths" (of *Satyavadi*) for their sense of dedication to the cause of *Matrubhumi*. To Gangadhar, *Satyavadi* was a "glitter of hope" in the "air of gloom". See, Das, *GBR*, Vol. I, p. 6; Senapati, *Prayaschit*, p. 14; Pradhan, *GG*, p. 266.

[178] *UD*, 30 December 1905, in *RNNB*, 13 January 1906.

[179] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, p. 34.

[180] *UD*, 18 March 1911, in *RNNB*, 1 April 1911.

[181] *Sambad Vahika*, 15 August 1912; *UD*, 20 August 1912, in *RNNB*, 31 August 1912.

a memorandum was sent to the viceroy to reconsider the joint province issue.[182] As a way out, the liberals proposed a separate Orissa Province because it was not administratively "convenient to transfer it to any of the states".[183]

The liberals had hoped in the late nineteenth century that the establishment of the press as a communication link between the government and the people would solve their problems. Accordingly, newspapers had been started and the government informed about public grievances. But even after more than 40 years, the problems remained. This frustrated the liberals. On the other hand, instead of coming forward to look for alternatives, the loyalists asked the leadership to be more loyal to the government and to "remain above all politics".[184] The disenchanted liberals began to overcome their illusions regarding the loyalists. Referring to their attitude, Madhusudan Das was believed to have said, "Unlike Bengal, Orissa lacks a strong educated middle class. We should not expect the rajas, zamindars and *moth mahant*s to protest against any misdeeds of the British".[185]

The liberals began to publish reports on feudal oppression and the resultant people's protests in the nationalist newspapers during this period. The *Sambad Vahika* (7 May 1908) and the *Star of Utkal* (undated) complained that the Dhenkanal prince was not concerned about any relief work and as a result, a large number of people were fleeing from the state due to acute shortage of food.[186] In 1912, the *UD* published more vivid reports on feudal oppression, especially in the Baramba State which witnessed mass fleeing of people. Petitions had been sent to the political agent, the deputy commissioner of Angul and the commissioner of Orissa in this regard, the paper observed.[187] Such reports, which were

[182] *UD*, 28 September 1912, in *RNNB*, 12 October 1912.
[183] *UD*, 14 September 1912, in *RNNB*, 28 September 1912.
[184] The Parikud prince, in his presidential speech at the Puri UUC of 1908. *UD*, 25 April 1908, in *RNNB*, 30 May 1908.
[185] Quoted in Surendra Mohanti's *Kulabriddha* (Biography of Madhusudan Das), Cuttack, 1978, p. 33.
[186] In *RNNB*, 13 June 1908.
[187] *UD*, 23 November 1912, in *RNNB*, 7 December 1912.

conspicuously absent in the mainstream nationalist press in the state earlier, symbolized the liberals' increasing disillusionment with the loyalists.

The disillusioned intelligentsia came closer to the anti-colonial movement led under the auspices of the INC. While for the loyalist-run *Sambalpur Hiteishini,* "the Congress was the source of all troubles in India", the *UD* argued in 1908 that the "partition of Bengal" and "ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa" were two major causes of Indian unrest.[188] While in 1906 the *UD* had written that this was not the time for the boycott of foreign goods, two years later (February 1908), while referring to the ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa, it changed track and urged for the "boycott of British goods". "That was how the Indians could make their displeasure known to the British", it pointed out.[189] The liberals now hoped that "Indians belonging to all parts of the British empire would make common cause with Mr Gandhi [Mahatma Gandhi]", who was "working for the Indians in South Africa", and would save their "national honour" from the "misguided colonial government".[190] Instead of limiting the struggle to their linguistic region, which had been the trend until then, now they were highlighting pan–Indian issues like the oppression of the Indians in South Africa and talking of "national honour".[191]

Relations with the Congress were further strengthened when the latter held its annual session at Bankipur (1912) in the Bihar and Orissa Province. Bihar leaders came to Orissa and sought the UUC's help for organizing the session.[192] Subsequently, Madhusudan Das

[188] *UD*, 31 October 1908, in *RNNB*, 5 December 1908.
[189] *UD*, 8 February 1908, in *RNNB*, 21 March 1908.
[190] *UD*, 1 February 1908, in *RNNB*, 14 March 1908.
[191] The concept of a greater (pan) Indian (Asian!) national movement found reflection in Fakir Mohan's *Buddhabatar* (incarnation of Lord Buddha). Written in 1909, the epic purports to unite the Japanese, Chinese, Indian and all of South-east Asian people under one platform, for they all had Buddha as their common spiritual guide. The Japanese victory over Russia, a European power, in 1905, convinced the author about the effectiveness of such Asian nationalism, so much so that, in a poem, "Japan", he appealed to them (the Japanese) to take along India in their great mission. See, Senapati, *FMG*, Part II, pp. 420, 460.
[192] This also shows that the relations never broke. They could be described as "lukewarm" at times.

was elected to the Subjects Committee for the Bankipur Session.[193] In 1915 and 1916, he was elected to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) at the Bombay and Lucknow Congress respectively.[194] Before this, in September 1911, a District Congress Committee (DCC) was organized in Orissa under the Bihar and Orissa (B&O) Provincial Congress. This was done at the instance of Madhusudan Das.[195]

The UUC's tilt towards the Congress coincided with the liberals' realization that the British gave priority to people's pressure rather than to reason. They realized that "petitions and representations" carried little meaning in the Raj. "The problems could be solved only through peoples' [mass] movement".[196] It motivated them to move towards mass politics.

This led to the foundation of the *Praja Pratinidhi Sabha*, a representative organization of the ryots, by Madhusudan Das at Cuttack in September 1912. Attended by "over 700 delegates from different localities", the first session of the *Sabha* demanded voting rights and deliberated on issues like local self-government, *Chaukidari* tax and panchayats.[197] The *Sabha* got a further leap when the liberals organized public meetings to demand representation of ryots in the legislative councils and the transfer of Ganjam to the Orissa Division at Puri and Berhampur.[198]

By 1914, the *UD*, despite working within the broad framework of loyalty to the government, reflected the changing political colour of the Orissa Movement. It asked people to be firm in their devotion to the Raj (*raj bhakti*) till the demands were fulfilled, but also urged them to organize political movements. Further, it reminded them that the UUC was no longer "apolitical", for it (UUC) had decided to organize political movements on various issues.[199]

[193] Mohanti, *Kulabriddha*, pp. 21–23.
[194] *Report on INC*, 1915, Appendix B and for 1916, Appendix B.
[195] *UD*, 28 September 1911, in *RNNB*, 12 October 1911.
[196] Madhusudan Das was said to have told this to Gopabandhu Das in 1912, observed the former's biographer, Surendra Mohanti. Mohanti, *Kulabridha*, pp. 115, 151.
[197] *UD*, 5 October 1912, in *RNNB*, 19 October 1912.
[198] *UD*, 21 September 1912, in *RNNB*, 5 October 1912; *UD*, 28 September 1912, in *RNNB*, 12 October 1912.
[199] *UD*, 31 January 1914.

The liberals' shift was, however, not sufficient to reconcile the mood of the moderate nationalists. The latter's ire against the British and the "high" classes was vitriolic. The liberals could not catch up their pace. Hence, the rift between the two trends of nationalists continued unabated throughout the period.

In the post-1912 phase, a general sense of disillusionment grew with liberal politics (and also with the government). It amounted to the further growth of moderate nationalists who were identified more and more with the Congress. The liberals, despite their broad association with the nationalists, were accused of being unattached to the Congress and unaware of "national currents".[200] The confrontation which was intermittently going on between the two trends since 1904–05, became intense now. It culminated in the taking over of the UUC by the moderate nationalists and in the formation of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee (UPCC) in December 1920. The development marginalized the liberals and established the moderate nationalists as the spokespersons of the Orissa Movement, as well as the advocates of the Congress movement in Orissa. It also undermined the loyalists and cast them out of nationalist politics, at least for the time being.

The moderate nationalists drew their main strength from the students and youth whose attraction to the radical actions of the Congress rather than to the liberals' petition-oriented politics was natural. It was this group of young converts (to the Congress) which started the confrontation with the liberals in December 1913. It all began at Puri where the students took over the *pandal* after the UUC session was over and held their annual conference there. While it was a general practice of the students to hold a meeting after the UUC session, this time many students resolved to form a body and demanded that their body be affiliated with the *Bihar Chhatra Sammilani*, the students' wing of the Congress in Bihar.[201] Perturbed by the development the liberals and the loyalists formed the *Yubak Samiti* to contain the students and the youth within the UUC. The

[200] Gopabandhu Das in the UUC of 1919. Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, Cuttack, 1977, pp. 2–3.
[201] Sabyasachi, *Chhatra Andolanar Itihas* (1947), Cuttack, 1986 (reprint), p. 7.

Samiti came into existence in 1914 and its president was Bikram Dev, the Khalikote prince. Since the students were not "politically mature", the UUC suggested that the *Samiti* should seek guidance from the "principals and other officials" of the colleges for the "success of the students movement in Orissa". The *Samiti* was also asked to have no relation with any organization other than the UUC.[202]

However, the UUC's attempt to dominate over the students (and youth) through the *Yubak Samiti* did not succeed in the long run. By 1915, the Oriya-speaking students of Madras Presidency had founded one *Odiya Chhatra Samiti*, quite outside the UUC's influence. For sometime they also brought out a journal, the *Chhatrabandhu*, which criticized the "elders" (liberals) for their "meanness".[203] As in the UUC, a strong moderate nationalists trend grew within the *Yubak Samiti*, which constantly struggled against the other trend controlled by the loyalist leadership. Gradually, the tension between the two became so intense that two separate conferences of the *Samiti* were held in March 1918.[204] The struggle was finally over in 1920 when the students' conference held alongside the UUC at Chakradharpur compelled the president, Biswanath Kar, an elderly leader, to accept the Congress creed. Kar accepted the students' demand against his "liberal" wish. This led to the *Yubak Samiti*'s merger with the "national current".[205]

The difference between the liberals and the moderate nationalists percolated into literature. As in politics, two distinct literary groups emerged in modern Oriya literature. The moderate nationalist writers known as the *Satyavadi gosthi* had to confront the liberals who were broadly known as the Madhu-Radhanath *gosthi*, named after Madhusudan Rao and Radhanath Ray.[206] Like the UUC, the

[202] *Ibid*.
[203] *Chhatrabandhu*, 27 September 1915, in Sabyasachi, *Chhatra Andolanar Itihas*, p. 10.
[204] *UD*, 6 April 1918.
[205] *Gadjat Basini*, 20 January 1921; *Utkal Sevak*, 6 January 1921.
[206] These are two broad formations, otherwise as creative writers each of them must have had their distinct styles. Nilakantha Das, *Nilakantha Granthavali*, Cuttack, 1963, pp. 143–44; N.N. Mishra, "*Odiya Kabyadharare Satyavadi Gosthir Bhumika*", in Kunja Bihari Das, ed., *Adhunik Odiya Sahityar Bhumi O Bhumika*, Bhubaneswar, 1972, p. 38.

Utkal Sahitya Samaj (1903), formed in the same year and at the same venue as the UUC, was the umbrella organization of all literary trends in the state. It regularly held its meetings and annual sessions, discussed issues related to literature and also honoured a few authors for their creative contributions. Its role as the promoter of the vernacular was quite significant during the period.

In a consequent confrontation, the *Satyavadi gosthi* tried to capture it during the annual session at Cuttack in 1918. Jubilant with their growing strength, the *Satyavadi* leaders proposed some names to the executive committee, which the president, Biswanath Kar, outrightly rejected. Following this, Godavarish Mishra asked for permission to speak but he was not allowed. Infuriated by the attitude, Godavarish gatecrashed onto the podium and vehemently attacked the president in his speech. Jagabandhu Singh, his colleague, who had been nominated for a literary award by the *Samaj* refused to accept it from Kar. Both Mishra and Singh condemned the president and described him as an "autocratic zamindar" and "worthless soul" of the *Samaj,* thereby demanding his ouster imperative. Others joined them. The conference ended in the taking over of the *Sahitya Samaj* by the *Satyavadi gosthi.* This marked the beginning of the end of the liberals' in Orissa politics.[207]

However, the change of guard in the *Sahitya Samaj* (in 1918) did not instantly lead to the taking over of the UUC leadership by the moderate nationalists. From 1917 onwards, the confrontation became intense, though the change came only in 1920. In the first phase, the loyalists were marginalized, for which the moderate nationalists tactically joined hands with the liberals. The loyalists' loss of control over the UUC was evident, for they could not nominate their candidates for the post of president from 1917 onwards. In 1917 and 1918, Fakir Mohan and Madhusudan Das presided over the UUC respectively. Followed by this, the moderate nationalists elected themselves to the post. In 1919, Chandra Sekhar Behera and in 1920 Jagabandhu Singh, two of their prominent

[207] *UD*, 9 February 1918.

leaders, presided over the UUC.[208] By 1920 when the proposal was moved for UUC's merger with the Congress, the two rival camps, the loyalists and liberals, were no match for the moderate nationalists whose rank and file was swelling day by day.

At the 1917 UUC session held at Cuttack, Gopabandhu criticized the leadership for not having achieved anything for Orissa.[209] In 1918 and 1919, the liberals were accused of not being aware of "national currents". They were also urged to merge the Orissa Movement with the Congress so as not to miss the chance of becoming an "integral part of Indian mainstream".[210] The Puri UUC in 1919 was almost like a Congress meeting, for Chandra Sekhar Behera began his presidential address by calling upon the people (of Orissa) to jump into the national movement en masse, lest Orissa be ignored by the British in the years to come.[211] Some of the resolutions passed in this conference included the condemnation of the Punjab killings (1919), strong objection to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms (1918), condemnation of the government for its neglect of relief work during the floods and famine of Orissa (in 1919), and demand for the suspension of rent and revenue collection till the famine situation improved in the state.[212]

In 1920, the UUC was organized at Chakradharpur. Much before the session the liberals had conceded their defeat. Madhusudan Das, who was supposed to preside over it, refused to take over. The moderate nationalists had offered him the position so as to take along the liberals to the Congress en masse.[213] Further, against the wishes of Mr Das, many liberals joined the moderate nationalists.[214] At the conference, the liberals were reduced to a small minority. When Gopabandhu proposed joining the ensuing Non-Cooperation Movement and forming the UPCC, only a few liberals like

[208] Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*, Appendix F, pp. 336–37; *Searchlight*, 7 January 1921.
[209] *UD*, 6 April 1918.
[210] Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, pp. 2–3.
[211] *Prajamitra*, 9 January 1920.
[212] *US*, 8 January 1920.
[213] *US*, 6 January 1921.
[214] Mohanti, *Kulabriddha*, p. 162.

Biswanath Kar, Braja Sundar Das and Srichandan Ghose were present to raise objection to the proposal on the ground that the time was not yet ripe for such a move. Gopabandhu's resolution was, however, passed with 127 votes in its favour and 16 votes against it.[215] The UUC had been taken over by the moderate nationalists. The UPCC was formed and the pledge for non-cooperation taken with great enthusiasm in Orissa.

The Congress could establish its provincial unit in Orissa only 35 years after its (Congress') formation. (The Congress was founded in December 1885 and the UPCC in December 1920.) However, this intervening period (1885–1920), despite the formal absence of the party, was not less tumultuous for Orissa. During the period (in fact, since the late 1860s) the ideas on Orissa-related issues crystallized into a definite movement striving for a linguistic and cultural identity of the people. The educated middle class, described as the intelligentsia, formed the core of this movement. As in politics, the intelligentsia's meaningful intervention in literature, as well as in other social and religious issues gave the movement a better grounding in the local society.

The intelligentsia was not a homogenous group. It comprised various ideological, political and social trends. One such trend was that of the moderate nationalists, which promised to give equal priority to the twin issues, the regional as well as the national issues. For putting forth its ideas, it had to confront others. In the resultant confrontation the moderate nationalists did not break away from the parent body of the Orissa Movement. Rather, they made consistent efforts to convert it into an integral part of the Congress, the representative force of the national current. It was this strategy of the young nationalists—moving along the main current and simultaneously maintaining their distinctness—which ultimately saved the Congress from isolation and made it the main political current in the Orissa context.

[215] *US*, 6 January 1921.

Two

Non-Cooperation in Orissa, 1920–22

I

The Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM) was the first major mass campaign against the British by the INC. Launched in August 1920, it continued unabated until its suspension following the "Chauri Chaura incident" in February 1922. The two immediate causes for the movement were the Punjab killings (1919) and the Treaty of Sevres (May 1920) described as "the Khilafat Wrong". Some of the main events included the surrender of official titles and honours, and boycott of foreign cloth, law courts and government-affiliated educational institutions. The main slogan, achievement of "*swaraj* within a year", greatly helped the movement to spread.

The NCM was launched in Orissa as a corollary of the campaign initiated at the national level. This, however, did not reduce the Orissa chapter to a mere prototype of its all-India version. In terms of participation witnessed, issues taken, forms used and objectives set, the NCM in Orissa had its own distinctness, which makes its study interesting and relevant today.

On the eve of the NCM, the Orissa nationalists formed the UPCC as the regional branch of the INC in December 1920. With this the *Utkal Sammilani*, translated as the UUC, spearheading the Orissa Movement since 1903 formally merged with the Congress. The merger not only intensified the non-cooperation campaign, but also

integrated the local movement with the nationalist struggle in the region. Issues concerning Orissa such as regional identity and national issues such as the "Punjab killings" and the "Khilafat wrong" dovetailed effectively with one another. The local Orissa leaders who joined the movement then on were called "non-cooperators". On the other hand, formation of state units on linguistic and cultural basis was recognized by the Congress in 1920. Such blending helped the Congress to expand its base in the state.

The ground for the NCM was set in 1918 and 1919 when Orissa fell victim to severe drought followed by floods in the region. The government failed to provide relief, which was highlighted in the local nationalist press. The discontent of the middle class and the lower middle class grew due to price rise and allied problems. From 20 *seer*s (a *seer* is roughly ¾ of a kg) a rupee in 1904, the cost of rice became six *seers* a rupee in 1920.[1] Food scarcity resulted in mass exodus from Orissa. Even in the less affected areas, there was "scarcely a household" which did not send at least one member as unskilled labour to Calcutta or elsewhere for some months in a year.[2]

The famine of 1919, in the aftermath of the drought and floods, turned far severe due to the spread of influenza and malaria, which killed thousands in the affected areas. The census figures of 1921 available for the three coastal districts of Orissa substantiate this (see Table 2.1).[3]

Table 2.1: 1921 Census Figures for Cuttack, Puri and Balasore

District	*Population*		
	1901	*1911*	*1921*
Cuttack	2,060,313	2,109,139	2,064,678
Puri	1,017,284	1,023,403	951,651
Balasore	1,073,642	1,055,568	980,504

[1] *Final Report on the Revenue Settlement of Orissa* (*S.R. of Orissa*), Patna, 1934. p. 4.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The nationalist press attributed this to government apathy. In 1918, the *UD* of Cuttack reported that acute food scarcity had forced at least 80 per cent of the households in Puri to forgo cooking for long stretches of time.[4] The *Prajamitra* of Aska quoting official sources said that the death and birth ratio was 20,000 to 10,205 in British Orissa in 1919.[5] The *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (*SH*) from Bamanda, despite being run by the local *gadjat* prince who was loyal to the government, also said that spectacular price rise had caused incalculable distress to the people in princely states.[6]

The UUC in its Puri session (1919) passed a resolution holding the government solely responsible for its "failure to provide relief to the victims of drought and floods", and demanded a thorough enquiry into the matter. "All revenue collection [should] be suspended till the situation improved", it demanded further.[7]

The nationalists were involved in a big way in the organization of relief work. Gopabandhu Das and his *Satyavadi* colleagues had already earned a name in this regard. They brought out a weekly journal, the *Samaj*, with the twin objectives of "co-ordinating the relief work" and of "exposing the government for its gross neglect of relief activities". The first issue was published in October 1919 coinciding with *Vijaya Dasami*, the day Lord Ram, representing the forces of good, defeated Ravana, the evil force.[8] Their efforts were further consolidated after contacts were established with Mahatma Gandhi and the *Bharat Sevak Samaj*. Prominent social activists like A.V. Thakkar, Lala Hansraj and Mohanlal came to Orissa to help with the relief work.[9] Through their relief work the nationalists emerged as an alterative institution to a government that had failed in its duty.

Nationalism was widely believed to have reached a "new stage" during the post-First World War period. People were "now ready

[4] *Utkal Dipika* (*UD*), 3 November 1918.
[5] *Prajamitra*, 30 January 1920.
[6] *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (*SH*), 25 January 1919.
[7] *Utkal Sevak* (*US*), 8 January 1920; *UD*, 16 March 1920.
[8] Radhanath Rath, in the Foreword to Gopabandhu Das, *Gopabandhu Rachanavali* (*GBR*), Vol. II, Cuttack, 1977, p. 3.
[9] *Samaj*, 15 May 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 65.

for *swaraj* " and could fight "all discriminations between the whites and the natives". "The last Congress at Calcutta", "the rise of the Indian business class" and "the exposure of the true nature of war", marked "the new stage", reported the vernacular press.[10] It was suggested that the "new stage" should witness integration of Orissa with India in "politics" as well as in other social spheres such as "literature, culture and drama".[11] While condemning the anti-Bengali parochial attitude, which was far too apparent in the preceding years, the *UD* assured the Bengalis settled in Orissa of an "equal share in the UUC".[12] It further said, "there may be differences within, but we all are one nation. Once we lost our independence, now we must fight together to regain it".[13]

The nationalists' discontent grew steeply after the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were announced in 1919. The UUC, striving for a linguistic province, had substantiated its demands in a book, *The Oriya Movement, Being A Demand for A United Province* and sent a memorandum to the Reforms Committee for consideration.[14] Gopabandhu Das, a signatory to the memorandum, asked everyone from Orissa to "non-cooperate" with the government if Orissa's demands were not considered by the Committee. He offered to resign from the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, to which he had been elected in 1917, and to inaugurate the non-cooperation campaign in Orissa.[15]

The intellectuals' discontent with the reforms after this announcement could be seen in a poem, *Bharati Bhabana*, by Gangadhar Meher (1862–1924). The poem read, "we realize now, you [government] do not keep your word [given during the war], though your victory is due to us [our support]".[16] Gopabandhu

[10] *UD*, 12 and 26 January 1918.
[11] *UD*, 24 January 1920; *Prajamitra*, 30 January 1920.
[12] *UD*, 16 February 1918.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] The UUC as an organization made efforts to compile its demands in the form of a book (report) titled as *The Oriya Movement, Being A demand for A United Province*, Ganjam, 1919 by Chakrapani Pradhan and Niranjan Patnaik popularly known as Two Bachelor of Arts.
[15] *UD*, 6 April 1918.
[16] Pradhan, *Gangadhar Granthavali*, p. 288.

singled out Orissa as the worst loser due to the reforms and called upon the people to fight the government single-handedly, even if others did not join the struggle.[17] Instead of the neighbouring middle class, now the British were blamed for the division of Orissa. It was alleged that the government wished Orissa to remain disjointed and "numerically weak everywhere".[18] The nationalists' efforts to link the Orissa issue with the failures of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms served as a prelude to the NCM in the state. More than anything else, it was in reaction to the insult it had suffered that Orissa needed to jump into the non-cooperation stir, argued the nationalists.

The vernacular press' outcry against the "Punjab killings" was another significant development of the period. The *UD* condemned the killings and described the enquiry by the Hunter Committee as an eyewash.[19] It also welcomed the proposed *Shahid Minar*, a memorial for the martyrs of Jalianwalabagh.[20] Earlier, the UUC passed a resolution condemning the killings at the Puri Conference in December 1919.[21] Gopabandhu Das declared that the killings had awakened Punjab, which would react through total non-cooperation with the government.[22] The killings and the subsequent developments moved Gangadhar Meher so much that he wrote: "we realize what you [the British] are inside only after the incident in the land of five rivers [Punjab]. You rewarded the man [General Dyer] who was the root cause of all troubles".[23]

The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene generated great hope, for he "stood higher" than and held a position "seldom attained" by any other leader.[24] Gopabandhu sought his advice for carrying out relief during the floods,[25] while

[17] *Samaj*, 10 January1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, p. 68.
[18] *Samaj*, 24 January 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, pp. 72–73.
[19] 16 January 1920.
[20] *UD*, 24 January 1920.
[21] *US*, 8 January 1920.
[22] *Samaj*, 22 November 1919, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, p. 50.
[23] Pradhan, *Gangadhar Granthavali*, p. 290.
[24] *Samaj*, 18 September 1920.
[25] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter *CWMG*), Vol. XVIII, Ahmedabad, 1966, p. 420.

Braja Sundar Das apprized him of the complexities of the Oriya linguistic issue.[26] The Orissa nationalists felt so close to Gandhi that Govind Mishra, a *meli* leader from Daspalla *gadjat*, escaped to the Sabarmati Ashram for refuge after the *meli* was suppressed in 1918. He was probably the first person from Orissa to have personal interaction with Gandhi.[27]

The high hopes that the Orissa leaders placed on Gandhi were never belied. Gandhi wrote on the famine in Orissa, approaching Indians to come forward with relief, because when "some people die of hunger, others have no right to eat in peace".[28] He described the division of Orissa as "unreasonable" and urged the people to examine "the Oriya movement with sympathetic care and attention".[29]

Mass mobilization was another dimension of politics preceding the NCM in Orissa, for "unity among the *mulia*s" (toiling masses) could compel "the *zaminadar*s, *malik*s and *mahajan*s" to bow down.[30] Gopabandhu equated the oppressive rajas to *baja* (killer bird) and the oppressed *praja* (subjects) to *para* (victim bird) and wished the raja's rule would soon be replaced with *praja*'s rule (a democratic system).[31] The penchant for democratic rule attracted the nationalists to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Gopabandhu Oriyanized the term "Bolshevik" *as* "*balasebi*" (worshipper of labour) and hoped that the *balasebi*s would one day overthrow all *rajakula* (empires) in the world. "When a poor peasant toils in the field for an ordinary living, why should a handful of *raja*s and *zamindar*s suck his blood like leeches and squander the wealth", he wondered.[32] The *UD's* wishful thinking was that the *balasebi*s might take over England and bring equality all over the Empire.[33]

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[27] Harekrishna Mahatab, *Gandhi O Odisa*, Cuttack, 1969, p. 4.
[28] *Navjeevan*, 16 May and 20 June 1920, in *CWMG*, Vol. XVII, pp. 420, 498.
[29] *CWMG*, Vol. XVII, p. 36.
[30] *Samaj*, 17 January 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, pp. 66–67.
[31] *Samaj*, 31 January 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, p. 71.
[32] *Samaj*, 31 January 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, p. 74.
[33] *UD*, 25 September 1920.

The adoption of Hindustani at the Amritsar Congress (1919) and Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence became a "vindication of the UUC policies, for it had been harping on the use of vernaculars and emphasizing on non-violent means since its inception". This made the UUC "a forerunner of the Congress". Hence their merger was seen as a "natural" fallout.[34]

Such internalization of the Congress and its struggle had wide ramifications. Several youth groups committed to the nationalist struggle emerged during the period. The *Bharati Mandir* of Cuttack (1919) was one such a group. Some of its prominent members were Harekrishna Mahatab, Nabakrishna Choudhury, Nityananda Kanungo, Basir Ahmed, Nikunja Das and Bhagarathi Mahapatra. Earlier, the *Satyavadi* with its school (1909) and two journals, *Satyavadi* (1913) and S*amaj* (1919), had been formed at Sakhigopal in Puri. Led by Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Acharya Harihar Das and Kripasindhu Mishra, the *Satyavadi* championed the cause of Indian nationalism against what they called Oriya parochialism. To the *Satyavadi*'s, the issues related to Orissa and those of India were interdependent. To substantiate this, Gopabandhu said in 1925:

> As the progress of a family does not stand in the way of the progress of the village, the provincial developments must not retard a nation's overall developments. Similarly, the national developments should not obstruct the development of mankind. They all are complementary and compatible to one another.[35]

The Oriya students in Madras, Calcutta and Patna belonged to similar formal and informal groups. The NCM brought all these groups together in the latter half of 1920. Due to their sustained efforts, the movement spread and struck deep roots in Orissa.

The NCM took the form of a mass meeting on Khilafat at Sambalpur on 14 August 1920. Some 200 urban poor, mostly masons, weavers, labourers and blacksmiths from both the Hindu

[34] *Samaj*, 3 January 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, p. 67.
[35] *Samaj*, 24 November 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 356–57.

and Muslim communities attended the meeting. Dasarathi Mishra, Janardan Supakar and Ladabhai Thoria, a Muslim trader, spoke on Khilafat and the scarcity of rice in the local market. While holding the government responsible for both the problems, they urged the deputy commissioner to supply rice at a subsidized rate so as to mitigate the hardships faced by the *kinikhia*s (urban poor).[36] Two more meetings were held to form a Khilafat branch committee and to collect funds for the Khilafat Movement. The speakers also decided to lead a mass campaign for cow protection in the locality. Held at the local Somnath temple complex, the meetings were presided over by Ladabhai Thoria and addressed by Swami Brahmanand Saraswati. Such efforts for blending the local issue with the national issue and for bringing about Hindu–Muslim unity were quite interesting at this stage.[37] In the following months, a delegation was led to the deputy commissioner's office demanding "subsidy in rice" for the urban poor[38] and meetings of the *Khilafat Sabha*, *Swaraj Sabha* and *Gorakhini Sabha* were held to focus on funds for the Khilafat Movement, "spread of s*wadeshi*", opening of "national schools", "panchayats", "boycott of elections" and "boycott of the *durbar*".[39] Due to the boycott, of 280 people only 28 voted in Sambalpur in the November 1920 elections. No one among the Muslims came forward to vote, reported the press.[40]

The NCM started off in Puri in a similar way in the last quarter of 1920. The Puri District Congress Committee (DCC), working under the Bihar PCC since 1916, met on 2 October 1920 and resolved to take up issues such as the boycott of elections, campaign for *swadeshi* and *charkha*, and the opening of a few more national schools in the district.[41] Following this, public meetings were held at Khandagiri (8 October), Jatani (16 October) and Puri (22 November). Addressed by Gopabandhu Das and Jagabandhu Singh,

[36] *US*, 9 September 1920.
[37] *Ibid*.
[38] *US*, 23 September 1920.
[39] *US*, 18 November 1920.
[40] *US*, 2 December 1920.
[41] *UD*, 9 October 1920.

the meetings were largely attended by the local *sarbarakaras* or the village revenue officers in Khurda, who had been denied their traditional rights over land, the ryots, who had been resenting and defying the rigorous forest laws in Khurda, as they had made sale of "even head loads of firewood punishable",[42] and primary teachers, "whose salary was even less than that of the municipality sweepers".[43] Issues such as *swadeshi* and boycott of elections were discussed at these meetings, "because the government never intended to give equal rights to the people" and "the councils had no meaning before [the attainment of] *swaraj*". Besides, demands were made for higher salaries of the teachers and for revoking the forest laws.[44]

Such blending of the NCM with the local issues seems to have been quite effective as was apparent in the November elections. In the Puri Municipality, voting was not more than 20 per cent, while in rural areas, despite police pressure, it was even less.[45]

The UUC held its annual session at Chakradharpur in December 1920. The delegates who attended the historic Nagpur Congress (1920), on their way back took part in the UUC. The growing discontent against the British accompanied by the momentum created in the nationalist circle in 1920 and in the preceding years paid rich dividends to the young nationalists. Against the wish of liberals such as Madhusudan Das, Biswanath Kar, Braja Sundar Das and Srichandan Ghose, they proposed the merger of the UUC with the Congress and the formal launch of the NCM in the state. Gopabandhu's resolution to that effect got overwhelming support when 127 delegates voted for it and only 16 delegates against it.[46] The UUC merged with the Congress. The UPCC was formed with Gopabandhu Das as president and the pledge of non-cooperation was taken with great enthusiasm in the state.

[42] *UD*, 16 October 1920.
[43] *US*, 22 April 1920; *Prajamitra*, 28 May 1920.
[44] *UD*, 6 November 1920; *Fortnightly Report from Bihar and Orissa (FRBO)*, Deposit, File No. 66 of December, 1920, *Home Dept., Political Section* (*Home Poll*).
[45] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 11 December 1920, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 14.
[46] *US*, 6 January 1921.

Following the formation of the UPCC, the NCM spread in the form of demonstrations, meetings, writings on walls, sloganeering and the opening of national schools in Sambalpur, Cuttack and Puri in January 1921. On 4 January, students in Sambalpur withdrew from the *zilla* school, marched in a demonstration and held a meeting at the Frazer Club. Ladabhai Thoria and some others addressed the meeting. A national school was set up on 5 January.[47] It was largely muslim students and hostel boarders who took the lead. They included Abdul Mazid, Krutartha Acharya, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Bhabani Mishra and Beni Madhab Supakar.[48] After that, meetings, processions and writings on walls asking others to boycott schools became a regular feature. The school students' initiatives in Sambalpur—despite being organizationally outside the mainstream Congress influence—to launch agitation evoked such response that in the third week of January, Nilakantha Das, one of the founders of the *Satyavadi* school and then a lecturer in Calcutta University, along with Bhagirathi Mishra, a student from Sambalpur studying law in Calcutta, and Gopabandhu Das came to Sambalpur to coordinate school activities and other agitational programmes there.[49]

The movement in Cuttack centred on the running of a national school by some senior students who had boycotted their college, setting up of an *ashram* and holding public meetings. A significant development of the period was the boycott of meetings organized for the felicitation of Madhusudan Das, the UUC leader, who opposed the NCM and the merger of the UUC with the Congress. Mr Das had contested the elections in November and had been newly appointed as a minister in the B&O government.[50] The young nationalists opposed him, for he had cooperated with the government by accepting the ministerial offer. When the liberals held meetings to felicitate him, the Congress workers boycotted them. The Puri felicitation meeting was marred as only 8–10 people

[47] *US*, 6 January 1921.
[48] *US*, 20 January 1921.
[49] Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 154; *Searchlight*, 4 February 1921; *US*, 20 January 1921.
[50] *Gadjat Basini*, 8 January 1921.

attended it due to the Congress boycott. At Cuttack "the non-cooperators", as the Congressmen were locally known, laid siege at the venue of the meeting on 9 January 1921 and passed resolutions condemning Mr Das for not supporting the NCM and accepting government office instead.[51] Besides, pamphlets ridiculing Mr Das "to draw his annual salary of Rs. 60,000 from the malaria of Balasore, famine of Puri and floods of Cuttack" were distributed.[52] Earlier the *Samaj* had ridiculed him as an "octogenarian government servant" and pointedly criticized the liberals for their efforts to felicitate Mr Das.[53]

As in Sambalpur, the *Satyavadi* was declared a national school under students' pressure on 21 January. Started in 1909, the school had been conceived on nationalist lines with little formal links with, and support from, the government. But the need for a recognized degree compelled the organizers to seek affiliation with Patna University in 1914–15. Similarly, financial constraints, due to which Nilakantha Das had to leave the school, forced the management to apply for a government grant. But the launch of the NCM reversed the situation. The students now pressed for severing all links with the government and got their guardians' consent to that effect.[54] Following the decision to declare it a national school, the *Satyavadi* school forfeited its claim over Rs 20,000 which the government had sanctioned to it.[55]

The Chakradharpur school too was declared a national school about the same time. Started in 1918 to promote Oriya in the outlying tracts, the school had Godavarish Mishra, one of the founders of the *Satyavadi*, as its head master. With the launch of the NCM, its conversion into a national school was a natural consequence.[56]

The organization of the UPCC and the penetration of the movement into new areas were the NCM's two significant achievements

[51] *Samaj*, 15 January 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. IV, p. 138; *Searchlight*, 19 January 1921.
[52] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 29.
[53] Quoted in *Gadjat Basini*, 20 January 1921.
[54] Appeal by Gopabandhu Das, *Samaj*, 3 January 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. I, p. 190.
[55] Das, *GBR*, Vol. I, p. 25.
[56] *Samaj*, 12 February 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 28.

in late January and February 1921. The UPCC constituted six DCCs and issued notification for the election of a regular body as against the ad hoc UPCC. Niranjan Patnaik, Harekrishna Mahatab, Jagabandhu Singh, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Dharanidhar Mishra and Godavarish Mishra became the respective presidents of the Ganjam, Balasore, Puri, Cuttack, Sambalpur and the outlying Singhbhum DCCs.[57] Further, three new outfits were formed under the UPCC, namely, the *Utkal Swarajya Sangh* for recruiting volunteers for *swadeshi* and for the prohibition campaign as well as for establishing *swaraj* panchayats, the *Utkal Swarajya Panthi* for collection of funds[58] and the USSP for the coordination of national schools.[59] The committees had their district-level units, like the *sakha sangh* for collecting funds and the *sebak sangh* for the *swadeshi* campaign. They were to work under the DCCs' umbrella.[60]

Reports about the visit of DCC leaders and of Congress meetings in the villages of Sambalpur,[61] Balipatna in Puri district,[62] Digapahandi in Ganjam[63] and Bhadrak in Balasore[64] were published in the press. The panchayat, prohibition and *swadeshi* campaigns and membership drive were the main focus of the meetings. While mapping public enthusiasm, Gopabandhu observed that some 150 primary members were enrolled in the Congress at Bhadrak alone in "a few hours time".[65] Jubilation and fervour marked all party activities. Rama Devi, who came from the nationalist family of Gopabandhu Choudhary and Nabakrishna Choudhury and later participated in the movement, recalled the scene at the Cuttack *Swaraj Ashram* in her autobiography. The

[57] *US*, 24 February 1921; Harekrishna Mahatab, *Dasabarsara Odissa*, Cuttack, 1977 (reprint, 1st edition 1935), p. 29.
[58] *Searchlight*, 6 February 1921.
[59] *Samaj*, 12 February 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 28.
[60] *US*, 10 February and 3 March 1921.
[61] *US*, 3 March 1921.
[62] *US*, 10 March 1921.
[63] *Gadjat Basini*, 2 April 1921.
[64] *Samaj*, 5 March 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 45.
[65] *Ibid.*

Congress workers would report at the *Swaraj* office in the morning and leave for nearby villages for campaign only to return late in the evening. One or two activists, usually Atal Bihari Acharya and Bhagirathi Mahapatra, would stay back for coordination work.[66] At the end of the meetings, some participants, especially the students, would take a pledge to "non-cooperate with the British government" and to "work for the nation".[67]

It was against this background that Gandhiji visited Orissa and addressed meetings at Bhadrak, Cuttack, Puri and Berhampur between 22 and 25 March 1921.[68] In his speeches, Gandhi emphasized Hindu–Muslim unity as a prerequisite to *swaraj*. Though for the Muslims, "NCM was the only means for redressal of the Khilafat wrong", Gandhi did not want to bargain with them "with respect to cow killings".[69] He focused on the students' participation and described "boycott" of schools as essential to avoid "contact with the polluted system of education and the demoralizing influence of the government". Even medical students were advised to "boycott" their studies and join the NCM, which would fetch "medicine for thirty crores of people" in the country.[70]

Gandhi attributed the chronic famine and the linguistic problem of Orissa to the government's colonial policy. At Berhampur, where the Oriya and Telugu-speaking people competed with each other on the language matter, he hoped to settle the issue in "a statesman-like manner" after the achievement of *swaraj*. Though he favoured "the linguistic distribution of provinces" generally, "national advancement" was to be given priority over all other issues during the movement.[71]

At Cuttack he met the Marwari and Gujarati businessmen and appealed to them for "funds", "to boycott foreign cloth" and to "popularize the spinning wheel through their customers".[72]

[66] Rama Devi, *Mo Jibana Pathe*, Cuttack, 1984, pp. 51, 52.
[67] *US*, 10 February 1921; Rama Devi, *Mo Jibana Pathe*, p. 42.
[68] *Gadjat Basini*, 9 April 1921; *Amrit Bazar* (*AB*) *Patrika*, 31 March 1921.
[69] *CWMG*, Vol. XIX, pp. 474–75.
[70] *Ibid*., p. 476.
[71] *Ibid*., p. 485.
[72] *Ibid*., p. 470.

Gandhi's criticism of "the English educated class" for having been "emasculated by colonial education" and of the native princes for becoming "victims of the slave-owning system" was quite blunt, but appropriate in the Orissa context.[73]

Gandhi's visit evoked great public response in Orissa. Everywhere people welcomed him with garlands and *chandan tika*s. They took out large processions to accompany him to the meeting place. For instance, at Bhadrak (22 March) as many as 72 *kirtan* troupes escorted him.[74] In terms of mass participation, the Puri meeting was "far larger than the annual car festival of Lord Jagannath".[75] Reacting to the event, an official reporter wrote: "After Gandhi's visit the non-cooperators have secured a firmer foothold in Orissa than they had hitherto succeeded in doing".[76] Gandhi's stress on communal amity and youth participation, his initiative to involve the business class in the movement, his concern for both "regional and national advancement" and finally his dig at the "English educated class" and "the native princes", the two bitter critics of the NCM, raised people's hopes to the extent that the UPCC resolved to contribute Rs 300,000 to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, to enroll 300,000 primary party members and to ensure the running of 200,000 *charkha*s by 30 June 1921. Visibly optimistic, Gopabandhu did not find the task very difficult, for despite the poverty everybody could willingly contribute two paise for such a noble cause. And two paise per individual would be enough to meet the UPCC target. It was important to reach out to people, for which he banked upon the students and the youth in the state.[77]

The cumulative effect of Gandhi's visit was reflected through a spontaneous *hartal* against "police *zulum*" in the Cuttack cantonment area in the last week of March. The local vendors refused to entertain the police constables' demand for certain food items at throwaway prices. When some 50 constables reacted by

[73] *Ibid*., p. 478.
[74] Mahatab, *Gandhi O Odisa*, p. 14.
[75] *Samaj*, 2 April 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 67.
[76] FRBO, Deposit File No. 51 of 1921, June, *Home Poll*.
[77] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 2 April 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 68.

attacking the shops, a *hartal* was declared instantly. Shops were closed, public meetings were held and resolutions "expressing strong resentment and dissatisfaction at the act of the police" and on "losing faith" in the government were passed. Further, a union of sweepers, *khansamas*, washermen and vendors was formed to carry forward the struggle. Though there was no report about the "struggle" in the succeeding weeks, the *hartal* was believed to have "opened a new page in the history of Utkal".[78]

On 31 March and 1 April 1921, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) met at Vijayawada. Gopabandhu Das attended the meeting and returned with the message that in view of its growing strength, Orissa's AICC membership quota had been raised from seven to 12, its share of the Tilak Fund raised from Rs 300,000 to Rs 500,000, and the number of primary party members increased to 500,000.[79] In the following months, the UPCC worked hard to reach the membership and the *swaraj* fund targets fixed by the AICC. As per the directives of the AICC, the other areas of focus were prohibition campaign and establishment of *swaraj* panchayats in the state.

The *satyagraha* week, which marked hectic campaign for funds and membership and so on was observed in all districts between 6–13 April 1921. The Balasore district was divided into four units—Basta, Soro, Bhadrak and Balasore. Public meetings, collection of funds and membership drive were the main programmes of each unit.[80] The DCC brought out a weekly, *Swarajya Samachar,* which ran for sometime. While describing the public response, Mahatab wrote about how an instant call for *hartal* by a handful of activists led to a complete closure of shops, students' boycott of the local *zilla* school, processions and public meetings at Balasore on 6 April.[81] At Bhadrak, the local party office turned into a *swaraj* panchayat for settling disputes between people.[82]

[78] *AB Patrika*, 29 March 1921.
[79] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 9 April 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 71.
[80] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 43.
[81] *Ibid*., p. 39.
[82] Harekrishna Mahatab, interview, by Haridev Sharma, Cuttack on 7 July 1973, at Cuttack, for the Oral History Project, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 38.

In Sambalpur, police actions and the non-cooperators' reactions became the focal point. The police warned people against attending Congress meetings. They assaulted a ryot in court. Moved by the prohibition campaign, the ryot, Parameswar Behera, had sought official permission to annul the contracts he had signed earlier to grow opium in his fields.[83] Similarly, Dharanidhar Mishra was fined Rs 25 for publishing a nationalist song.[84] The song *Swaraj Bhaya Albat Hoga* by Nilakantha Das, given next, created a stir in all Congress meetings and processions there.

Oh great children of India!
Give up *golami*, march forward,
Don't frustrate your mother,
Don't live as *golam*.
Golami helps the *Raj* in its business.
Things go across the sea,
While you remain a beggar at home.
Remember, school, *kuchery* and council
Are chains of *golami.*
Forget not
Freedom, *golami* and *naukri* are only states of mind.
Liberate the mind
Let it decide on its own,
Break relations with the government,
Everything will be all right.[85]

The Congress reaction came in the form of a *hartal* on 19 April followed by a public meeting at Sambalpur on 25 April.[86] Besides, campaigns were intensified in the villages of Bargarh and Remenda by Anant Mishra from Puri and in Themra and adjoining villages by Chandra Sekhar Behera, Purna Chandra Das, Nilakantha Das

[83] *US*, 12 May 1921.
[84] *Samaj*, 30 April 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 83–84.
[85] See Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 188.
[86] *US*, 12 May 1921; *Samaj*, 30 April 1921.

and Ratan Singh Bhoi. They resulted in the enrolment of new members and the collection of *swaraj* funds.[87]

In Cuttack, the *satyagraha* week witnessed a *hartal* on 6 April and mass "fasting" by the Congress workers during day time.[88] In Khurda, the authorities reacted to the *hartal* by dismissing Chaitanya Patnaik and by issuing show cause notice to Dasrathi Patnaik, the two *sarbarakar* leaders.[89] Public empathy for the Congress could be deduced from the fact that at Joranda, an interior village in Angul, some Rs 40 were collected for the *swaraj* fund after the Congress workers held a meeting there during the week.[90]

From 21 April, Gopbandhu undertook a statewide tour and addressed meetings at Balasore, Chakradharpur, Chainbasa, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Cuttack. He shared the stage with Rajendra Prasad from Bihar at Chakradharpur and Chainbasa. The main emphasis at the meetings was on the appeal for contributions to the Tilak funds, membership drives and revival of the local Khilafat committees.[91] On 20 April at a local festival in Bhubaneswar, Jagabandhu Singh mobilized the crowd to pull back the car (chariot) of Lord Jagannath, for the temple authorities had not draped the Lord with *khadi*. Police intervention against this act resulted in a public meeting in which the leaders demanded an apology from the police for their high-handedness.[92]

In Khurda, local resentment against forest laws, *chaukidari* tax and Union Board tax, locally known as the latrine tax, and the Congress efforts to highlight them resulted in some militant action. Gopabandhu and some other leaders held meetings in Khurda and Banki villages and highlighted these issues in early May.[93] Gopabandhu criticized the "latrine tax" as superfluous for toilets constructed by the local Union Board were redundant.[94] Soon after,

[87] *Seba*, 18 and 28 May, 1921; *Searchlight*, 1 June 1921.
[88] Rama Devi, *Mo Jivana Pathe*, p. 54.
[89] *Samaj*, 7 May 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 91.
[90] FRBO, Deposit, File No. 51 of 1921, June, *Home Poll.*
[91] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 14 May, 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 92–93.
[92] *Searchlight*, 27 April 1921.
[93] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 7 May 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 91.
[94] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 14 May 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 93.

forest laws were reported to have been flouted. Resignation by a few *sarbarakar*s and strike in the Khurda High School was also witnessed. During the strike, the school building along with the quarters of the Union Board overseer, veterinary assistant and the dispensary nurse were set on fire.[95] Around the same time, in Cuttack, the offices of the school inspector and the college principal were reportedly set ablaze by some students.[96]

Whether the UPCC had given sanction to such militant actions is not clear. However, mobilization at all levels to cover "the quota" fixed by the AICC seemed to be the party's main emphasis in Orissa. Gopabandhu insisted that "low" caste and "low" class people should "take part in the Congress movement", which would give them "a sense of equality and self-confidence", Further, "the Congress and *swaraj* must not remain confined to a few rich alone".[97] The realization that "British Orissa alone cannot cover the quota" led some former students of the *Satyavadi* school to enter the Keonjhar state and organize a *hartal* along with a procession and public meeting on 16 May.[98] While the Congress workers, who had left from outside, were immediately driven away, the local activists such as Chema Tripathy, Nanda Kishor Puhan and Jagabandhu Chakravarty were put in jail.[99] Babaji Ram Das who campaigned in Dhenkanal was also forcibly driven out from the *gadjat*.[100]

Despite such hostility from the princely states, the Congress leaders never failed to appeal to the princes for support at least on "mild" aspects like Tilak funds, prohibition, *swadeshi* campaigns and *swaraj* panchayats, for "the *swaraj* movement belonged to all classes and all parties of the people".[101] The princes' support to the Congress would be in their own interest, because "the

[95] FRBO, Deposit, File No. 46 of 1921, June, *Home Poll.*

[96] FRBO, Deposit, File No. 63 of 1921, June, *Home Poll.*

[97] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 7 May 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 87.

[98] *Gadjat Basini*, 25 June 1921; S.N. Patnaik, *Odisa Swadhinata Andolanar Itihas*, Cuttack, 1972, p. 44.

[99] *Seba*, 11 June 1921.

[100] *Seba*, 28 May 1921.

[101] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 20 August 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 139.

government never cared for them except at the time of war" for "loans" and for "recruiting labourers".[102]

Such appeals, however, did not bear any fruit and the princes and zamindars remained a "loyalist force" throughout the period.[103] For them, the NCM was an "untimely" and "ill-conceived" measure[104] and the boycott of government schools and launching of national schools were harmful for "no education was possible without the help of the raja and the government".[105] The *swaraj* panchayat was unacceptable as "it may" give "wrong judgement".[106] Similarly, the *charkha* was a total "waste", for people could earn more by doing other things.[107] Only the prohibition campaign was "harmless", because it could ameliorate the lot of the "low class" people, the perceptible victims of liquor.[108]

Despite the opposition from the princely classes, the movement did gain a firm hold by June. As per the official report, a general impression had been created that "the British Raj was fast approaching its end" and would be replaced by the Gandhi raj. Further, "the *swaraj* movement and Gandhi had been blessed by Lord Jagannath following a pact between the Raja of Puri and Gandhi". "The Puri temple would be closed" till the attainment of *swaraj*, since the Lord was accompanying Gandhi in his nationwide tour.[109] Such beliefs, however, did not find any mention in the vernacular press of the time. If they had spread at all, as mentioned in the government's fortnightly report, it only explains the deep inroads the NCM had made among the people within a very short span of time.

In June, the Congress campaign was intensified with the objective of covering the "quota" fixed by the AICC. Mazhar-ul-Haq from Bihar addressed meetings in places like Sambalpur, Cuttack and

[102] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 19 March 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 48.
[103] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 43.
[104] *Gadjat Basini*, 15 January 1921.
[105] *Gadjat Basini*, 26 March 1921.
[106] *Gadjat Basini*, 30 April 1921.
[107] *Gadjat Basini*, 4 June 1921.
[108] *Gadjat Basini*, 5 March 1921.
[109] FRBO, Deposit, File No. 51 of 1921, June, *Home Poll.*

Balasore where there was a sizeable Muslim population. Accompanied by Gopabandhu, he emphasized Hindu–Muslim unity and described the NCM as a common cause for both the communities.[110] Congress meetings were also reportedly held at Jajpur and Salepur in Cuttack and Barpali and Kumbhari in Sambalpur. Enrolment of primary members, collection of funds and popularization of the *charkha* were the main focus everywhere.[111] In early June, when Rajkrishna Bose was arrested during campaigns at Cuttack, a large crowd accompanied him up to jail and protest meetings were held in different parts of the town. The arrest, instead of breaking the tide "helped it to grow", reported the local press.[112]

Despite all its efforts, the UPCC could not cover the "quota". A little over 40,000 primary members were enrolled and Rs 22,000 collected for the Tilak *Swaraj* Fund by the end of June 1921. The total number of *charkha*s distributed in the state did not exceed 15,000 even by the nationalists' estimate. The district-wise break-up is shown in Table 2.2.[113]

Table 2.2: District-wise Break-up of Congress Membership, Tilak Fund and *Charkha*s in June 1921

District	*Membership*	*Tilak Fund (in Rs)*	*Number of* (Charkhas)
Cuttack	15,802	7,000	1,500
Puri	9,000	6,000	2,000
Balasore	5,000	3,000	2,000
Ganjam	2,800	1,200	1,500
Sambalpur	5,935	2,870	8,000
Singhbhum and the princely states	1,500	2,000	–
Total	**40,037**	**22,070**	**15,000**

The leadership objectively analyzed its failure to cover the "quota" by the due date. A major portion of Orissa remained under the

[110] *US*, 23 June 1921.
[111] *Seba*, 11 June 1921.
[112] *Ibid.*
[113] *Seba*, 17 July 1921.

*gadjat*s where the movement was hardly visible. Only in Keonjhar and Dhenkanal, some campaigning had been initiated. But repression in these areas was far more than that in British Orissa.[114] In many zamindari estates such as Angul, Banki and Rajpur (near Jharsuguda) in British Orissa, hostility towards the Congress was not negligible. In rural Orissa, the revenue and police officials, who were "the real government", created strong fear among the people against Congress work.[115] Besides, the lawyers and "other English educated people" showed "their general apathy" to the movement.[116]

Another reason was the absence of a strong cadre base of the party. The UPCC, formed at the end of December 1920, was a new party in Orissa. Moreover, it did not get the wholehearted support of the experienced leadership of its predecessor, the UUC. Only a handful of UUC leaders, such as Gopabandhu, worked in the Congress. The leadership was drawn almost entirely from among students and the youth. It was a small group, inexperienced in political work, which held the responsibility of running national schools, organizing meetings, acting as speakers, campaigning in the villages and many other things. As Gopabandhu wrote, the relative failure of the NCM in Orissa was not due to "any public apathy", but because of insufficient number of cadres to carry the message.[117]

The failure, however, did not deter the nationalists in the coming months. Gopabandhu gave an assurance that the party would work further to cover the "quota" even after June. The realization that a strong cadre base was essential for any movement motivated them to develop it in the following months.

The apprehension that the "quota" could not be covered by the due date (30 June),[118] created a kind of lull in the movement in July 1921. Congress activities were mainly confined to constructive

[114] *US*, 15 December 1921.
[115] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 14 May 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 92.
[116] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 23 July 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 137.
[117] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 25 June 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p.118
[118] *Ibid.*

work such as distribution of relief under the banner of the Non-Government Relief Committee.[119] This encouraged the hitherto dormant liberals to revive the "Oriya issue" as a counter to the NCM. On 26 June 1921, they held a meeting to highlight the "negative aspects" of the NCM at Cuttack. The speakers included Chintamani Acharya, Braja Sundar Das, Biswanath Kar and Kalpataru Das.[120] There were also suggestions for organizing the UUC outside of the "non-cooperators" area of influence. This meant the UUC would be taken out of the UPCC.[121] As a response, the Sambalpur DCC promptly formed a preparatory committee under the chairmanship of Dharanidhar Mishra to organize the proposed annual session of the UUC at Jharsuguda. Anant Mishra was the secretary and Mahavir Singh the local organizer.[122] Further, the UPCC authorized the DCC to make the UUC a success "since there was no contradiction between their goals".[123] Such efforts to contain the issue of regional identity seemed to have paid rich dividends to the Congress. This was apparent from the liberals' silence during the succeeding months.

The lull was, however, short-lived as some radical actions like the boycott of foreign cloth by burning it in bonfires and picketing got priority in the AICC meeting at Bombay in late July 1921.[124] From Orissa, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Niranjan Patnaik, Gopabandhu Das, Harekrishna Mahatab and Godavarish Mishra attended the meet.[125] Soon after, Tilak *Utsav* was organized on the occasion of Bal Gangadhar Tilak's death anniversary at Cuttack, Jajpur, Binjharpur, Banki, Pattamundai and Jenapur on 1 August.[126] At Cuttack, the Congress and Khilafat workers went in procession, tied *rakhi*s to one another, held a public meeting and sold *khadi*,

[119] *Searchlight*, 10 July 1921.
[120] *US*, 14 July 1921.
[121] *Gadjat Basini*, 17 September and 1 October 1921.
[122] *Seba*, 9 July 1921.
[123] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 16 July 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 133.
[124] P. Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress: 1885–1935*, Vol. I, Bombay, 1946 (reprint), p. 212.
[125] *Seba*, 3 September 1921; Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 48.
[126] *Seba*, 13 August 1921.

sweets, *swadeshi* dolls and pictures of Gandhi and Tilak in a *mela* organized on the occasion. *Swadeshi kirtan* and burning foreign cloth in bonfires were also part of the *mela* proceedings.[127] At Banki, the bonfire led to a case of arson in which the local school building was burnt. At Salepur the *swadeshi kirtan* included exhibition of *charkha*s in place of pictures of Lord Krishna.[128] On 14 August, Cuttack witnessed another bonfire. Gopabandhu and others collected foreign clothes in a door-to-door campaign and set them on fire in the evening.[129]

Swaraj kirtan, campaigning for prohibition and *swadeshi*, and collecting "Tilak Funds" by singing nationalist songs had become very effective in rural Balasore during the period.[130] Composed by local poets and party workers such as Birakishor Das and Banchhanidhi Mohanty, the songs contained all the basic components of the NCM. One of Banchhanidhi's songs read:

> How long would you remain sad?
> How long would you bear the sufferings?
> Peace is taken away,
> Instead, they brought taxes and inflation,
> You are deprived of food and clothes.
> You beg for them,
> This rule is unbearable.[131]

Initiating radical action on local issues was a significant feature of the movement in Orissa during the period. Thus, Gopabandhu protested against *rasad* and *begari*, two forms of unpaid labour that persisted in the zamindari and princely states, and warned the princes not to behave like the British. "If such practices were not stopped, they (princes) would face serious consequences after *swaraj*".[132] Around the same time, Congress workers entered

[127] *Seba*, 6 August 1921.
[128] *Seba*, 27 August 1921.
[129] *Searchlight*, 24 August 1921.
[130] *Seba*, 13 August 1921.
[131] Quoted in N. Satpathy, *Sabujaru Sampratika*, Cuttack, 1979, p. 484.
[132] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 23 July 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 174.

zamindari estates like Kanika, Rajpur and Madhupur, held meetings there, enrolled new members and collected funds. In Rajpur, 22 people were enrolled as members.[133] In Madhupur, a primary teacher was dismissed for "giving shelter to the Congress workers".[134] Babaji Ram Das while addressing students strongly criticized the local prince and the government for the recent hike in land rent at Kanika on 15 August.[135] Soon after, six students withdrew from the school and a few employees including Chakradhar Behera and Anand Jena were dismissed from the Kanika estate service.[136]

The organization of Oriya migrant labour also started during this time. While one Madhusudan Mohanty working in Burma and Chakradhar Patnaik working as a coolie in Egypt contacted the UPCC, Krishna Chandra Roy, Nibaran Chandra Roy and Jagabandhu Tripathy from the Cuttack DCC visited Calcutta to organize the Oriya coolies there.[137] The move was quite effective as the Oriya coolies and carters, on the Congress' call, refused to carry loads of foreign cloth in Barabazaar (Calcutta) in late August.[138]

The authorities reacted to the radical actions by prohibiting many Congress leaders from making public speeches under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). Thus, Gopabandhu Das was "gagged" at Cuttack, Puri and *Satyavadi* for two months from 8 September 1921.[139] Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Digambar Srichandan were "gagged" at Kendrapada and Khurda respectively, while the more stubborn Babaji Ram Das was put in jail in late August.[140]

[133] *Seba*, 27 August 1921.
[134] *Seba*, 3 September 1921.
[135] *Seba*, 1 October 1921.
[136] Prafulla Das, "Kanika Peasants' Movement, 1921–22: A Historical Appraisal", in *Orissa History Congress Proceedings*, Vol. XV, 1989, p. 157.
[137] *Seba*, 27 August 1921.
[138] *Seba*, 10 September 1921; Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 4 February 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 134.
[139] *Searchlight*, 16 September 1921.
[140] *Seba*, 1 October 1921.

The Congress' response to such repressive measures was no less interesting. At public meetings, the speakers described jail as "the gateway" and "only way" to *swaraj*.[141] The nationalist press showered praise on all those who had the opportunity to go to jail for the cause of *swaraj*.[142] Leaders generally refused to seek bail and won public accolades.[143] During the period of "gagging", Gopabandhu always prepared written speeches to be read out by an activist, while he would be present at the public meetings. His presence created the necessary impact and this helped the nationalist spirit to rise in the state.

A poet himself, Gopabandhu Das often prepared his speech in verse. This was not only read in the meetings, but also published in the *Samaj*. One of them titled "*Muka Minati*" (The Dumb Appeals) read:

> The magistrates of Cuttack and Puri have served orders to "gag" me under Section 144.
> It hardly bothers me.
> I am strong enough to disobey this
> But, the Congress gives no permission.
> Hence this appeal by a dumb.
> Oh my brothers and sisters of Utkal,
> The news must not worry you either.
> What needed to be told,
> I have repeatedly done so earlier.
> According to my strength
> I have circulated the good news of *Swaraj* everywhere,
> Mahatma Gandhi's *mantra*
> Imparted the education of non-cooperation.
> You all are convinced,
> *Swaraj* will be a reality.
> Let there be unity amongst all
> And commitment to India.

[141] *Seba*, 29 October 1921.
[142] *Seba*, 15 October 1921.
[143] *Seba*, 22 October 1921.

Let us have self-purification,
Give up opium, liquor, gambling and womanizing.
Set up panchayats in every village,
Don't give money to the court and be a sinner.
Wearing foreign clothes is like a sin.
Keep aloof from it
Put it on fire.
Spin with *charkha* at home
Don't let the national wealth go out.
Swadeshi may be coarse,
Wear it and be gratified …
You [students] come out of the servant-making industry,
Still there is time.
The nation wants you
Serve like heroes, not as beggars.
You lawyers are independent in your professions
Ask your conscience,
Isn't the court a swindler of wealth and respect of the nation?
People will set up panchayats and serve the nation…
All those who are in government service,
Don't forget your nation.
If you are determined,
Give up *golami.*
If not, do your best to help the people.
You princes and zamindars!
God has empowered you,
You could help others, if you wish.
Give up ego and selfishness,
Don't torture your ryots.
See how distressed they are,
For want of food and clothes they suffer.
Realize, your fate is tied to theirs.
No government could care you …[144]

[144] Quoted in the Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 168–72.

Bonfires and picketing were a part of the Gandhi Day (2 October) celebrations in many parts of Orissa in 1921. At Berhampur, Cuttack and Sambalpur, the national school students took out processions, collected foreign cloth and made a bonfire of it in the evening.[145] In Muslim pockets like Jharsuguda, Jagatsinghpur and Cuttack, collective pledges were taken on 16 October in response to the Karachi resolution, which declared it unlawful for Muslims to continue in the British army.[146]

In November 1921, the political activities centred around the issue of Prince of Wales' visit to India on 17 November. The *Gadjat Basini* brought out by the prince of Talcher welcomed the prince (of Wales) as he was "not a political leader" but "a well wisher" of India and "a very liberal person".[147] Similarly, on 14 November, liberals such as Biswanath Kar, Braja Sundar Das, Chintamani Acharya and Laxmidhar Mohanty met at Cuttack and formed a committee to receive the prince at Patna[148] so as "to solve all problems of the country through dialogue and cooperation".[149] On the other hand, the UPCC called for a *hartal* on 17 November, to boycott the prince's visit. On the day of the *hartal*, shops were closed and bonfires organized in many big towns like Sambalpur, Cuttack, Balasore, Puri, Bhubaneswar and Khalikote, as well as in some small towns like Attabira, Tangi, Jharsuguda, Gudbhaga, Rambha and Tirtol.[150]

Two developments in November and December 1921, that is, the arrest of Gopabandhu Das in Khurda and boycott and picketing in Balasore and Puri widened the nationalists' base in Orissa. The police arrested Gopabandhu Das, the editor of *Samaj*, for publishing a "defamatory" news item towards the close of October.

On 13 August 1921, the *Samaj* published a news item, "Dangerous, If it is True", which reported that two police constables

[145] *Seba*, 15 October 1921.
[146] *Searchlight*, 27 October 1921.
[147] *Gadjat Basini*, 19 November 1921.
[148] *Gadjat Basini*, 26 November 1921.
[149] *US*, 10 November 1921.
[150] *Searchlight*, 20 November 1921; *Seba*, 26 November and 3 December 1921.

of Begunia *Thana* (Puri district) molested a woman near the local *haat*. Consequently, the woman committed suicide. The paper was not sure about the authenticity of the news item and promised to investigate the matter further. On 27 August 1921, it reported that the matter was still under investigation and on 24 September 1921, regretted that there was no truth in the news. However, based on this news item, the police filed a defamation suit in the name of Gopabandhu Das, the editor of *Samaj.* Soon after, Gopabandhu was arrested and produced in Khurda court. Incidently, Suresh Chandra Bose, Subhash Bose's brother was the magistrate at Khurda. Gopabandhu was given bail, but as a non-cooperator he refused to accept it and refused to defend himself against the charges during the hearing of the case. Recounting the incident later, Bose said he had been pressurized by the authorities to award severe punishment to Gopabandhu. On the days of the hearing, thousands of people would gather in the court's premises and shout slogans in support of the Congress movement. There was a move to shift the case to Puri because of the large crowds. On the final day of the trial, not less than 30,000 people had collected. "I was amazed. What charismatic influence does Pandit Gopabandhu have over lakhs and lakhs of people there! What great love and respect people have for him!" wrote Bose, later.[151]

As Bose recounts, the people held the Congress leaders (he specifically mentions Gopabandhu Das) in such high esteem in Khurda, a nationalist stronghold, that going against their wishes and awarding punishment to the leader was becoming difficult for the officers. When a defamation suit was filed and Gopabandhu arrested in Khurda in October 1921, the senior magistrate, Ajay Chandra Das, showed reluctance to preside over the court. And so, the responsibility fell on Bose, whose sympathy for the nationalists was very well-known. Despite official pressure, he acquitted Gopabandhu and earned the people's goodwill. Bose's narratives demonstrate how public enthusiasm could motivate certain individual officials to take a positive view of the movement.

[151] See, Das, *GBR*, Vol.VI, pp. 425–27, 457–84.

As a "non-cooperator", the leader had refused to take personal bail. On the trial dates, that is, 28 October and 9, 17 and 22 November, large crowds gathered, held meetings and *kirtan*s and shouted slogans in the Khurda court premises. Nilakantha Das, Jadumani Mangaraj and a few other leaders addressed the meetings. The crowds were so restive that Gopabandhu had to intervene to pacify the people. Finally, when he was acquitted, a grand procession was taken out and a mammoth public meeting held at Khurda on 22 November.[152]

On the same day, Harekrishna Mahatab and four others were arrested for picketing a bullock cart carrying foreign cloth to Balasore. They too refused bail. A large procession escorted them to jail with *kirtan*s. Ten other volunteers continued the picketing and the local *swaraj* panchayat imposed a fine on two traders who refused to comply with the non-cooperators' call for boycott on the next day.[153] In other parts of Balasore, such as Basta, Soro, Jaleswar and Bhadrak, some traders, under pressure from the non-cooperators, reportedly took a collective pledge to boycott the sale of foreign cloth.[154] At Puri, in early December 1921, the coolies and carters, while responding to the boycott call, held a strike because of which a Cochin-bound ship, due to carry rice, could not be loaded for three days.[155]

In December 1921, the Congress mobilized its members to attend its annual session at Ahmedabad. The process of mobilization sustained the wave. It was to "be the last session of the Congress" so all members should have "the privilege of attending it", for *swaraj* would be achieved and the Congress disbanded by the end of 1921.[156] The DCCs held meetings to nominate delegates to the Congress. Some 15 members from Sambalpur and 11 from the adjoining *gadjat*s sought the UPCC's permission to attend it.[157]

[152] *Searchlight*, 6 November 1921; *Samaj*, 26 November 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 206.
[153] *US*, 1 December 1921.
[154] S.N. Patnaik, *Odisa Swadhinata*, p. 50.
[155] *Searchlight*, 9 December 1921; Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 4 February 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 134.
[156] *Seba*, 12 November 1921.
[157] *Seba*, 26 November 1921.

While 108 delegates from Orissa attended the session, 12 of them, including Gopabandhu and Niranjan Patnaik, were elected to the Congress Subject Committee.[158] This was the largest contingent Orissa had ever sent to the Congress.

Formation of volunteer corps, as per the decision of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) in its Bombay meeting on 23 November, engaged the nationalists in December 1921 and January 1922. This raised hopes that the Civil Disobedience Movement and, consequently, *swaraj,* were imminent. The spirit remained quite high until the NCM was abruptly suspended in February 1922.

As per the UPCC's specifications, each volunteer corp would be a three-tier organization with the *nayak*, *maha-nayak* and *adhi-nayak* being the leaders at the village, district and provincial levels. The village-level would have 10–20 volunteers who would be accountable to the *nayak* for their activities. The duties of a volunteer included providing security in the locality, settling disputes, participating in all Congress activities, rendering social service during exigencies and maintaining a weekly report of their own activities. Wearing *khadi* and spinning cloth were compulsory for all volunteers. The UPCC further stated that until the launch of the civil disobedience agitation, all corps members would engage themselves in picketing (foreign cloth and liquor shops), *hartal*s and recruitment of more volunteers.[159]

The UPCC set up a target of recruiting 3,000 volunteers in the state. For this, meetings were held regularly at different places like Cuttack, Sambalpur, Balasore, Basta, Jharsuguda and Bargarh in January 1922.[160] Gopabandhu was once again "gagged" just before addressing a public meeting in Cuttack on 11 January 1922. However, his address read out by a volunteer, emphasized that anti-people rules would be disobeyed very soon, "since meetings and organization of volunteer corps were people's birthrights". Further, "for a Congressman, there was no other government than the

[158] *Report on INC,* 1921, p. 111.
[159] *US,* 29 December 1921.
[160] *Seba,* 14 and 21 January 1922; *Samaj,* 21 January 1922.

Congress".[161] While some 600 volunteers were reportedly recruited in Sambalpur district alone,[162] elaborate preparations were made to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement in Sartha (Basta) and Khurda by the Balasore and Puri DCCs respectively. After thorough screening, some 25 volunteers were trained in Sartha and 24 in Khurda to begin the "ensuing" CDM, which, according to the nationalists, would include the "no-rent campaign".[163] At Khurda, the Puri DCC even fixed 3 February as the date for launching the movement in Orissa.[164]

Fearing the "ensuing" civil disobedience, the excise department of the Bihar and Orissa government (B&O Govt.) advanced the date of the annual auction of liquor shops and other excise products to 16 January 1922. Following this, the Congress volunteers began picketing the venue of the auction and liquor shops from the evening of 15 January 1922. Appeals were made against participation in the auctions. Apprehending more trouble, the authorities cancelled the auction on the eve of 16 January. This was perceived as a great victory in the Congress circles.[165]

On 27 January 1922, during the local Triveni *mela* at Banmalipur near Khurda, the volunteers, while shouting slogans like *Mahatma Gandhi ki jay*, refused to obey the police, who objected to the sale of *khadi* and to picketing. The volunteers made elaborate plans for the sale of *khadi* and for picketing in the *mela* compound. Soon others joined in the slogan shouting, which continued till the *mela* was over. Three volunteers were arrested on 30 January. In the violence that followed, the sub-inspector's quarter was set on fire, his bicycle damaged and the police station pelted with stones.[166]

As per the DCC's decision, a meeting was held "to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement" at Khurda on 3 February. Despite "prohibitory order" of the police, some 2,500 people attended the

[161] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 14 January 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 243.
[162] *Searchlight*, 6 March 1922.
[163] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 53; *Samaj*, 4 February 1922.
[164] *Samaj*, 4 February 1922.
[165] *Samaj*, 21 January 1922.
[166] *Searchlight*, 19 March, 1922; *Samaj*, 11 February 1922.

meet. Gopabandhu violated the “gagging order” and addressed the meeting. However, he appealed to the people to wait for some more time, as instructions to stop payment of revenue had not yet come from the Congress headquarters. After the meeting, many people offered to go on *satyagraha* and courted arrest “only to be released in the evening”.[167]

At Puri, measures were taken to prevent the export of rice due to the prevailing famine conditions in the preceding years. The DCC instructed the merchants not to export rice, appealed to the carters and loaders to boycott the *mahajan*s engaged in the rice business and suggested to the employers that they should make payments to the wage earners in kind and not in cash so as to augment the outflow of rice from the locality.[168] Following this, the police issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC against Gopabandhu Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Bharat Ghosal and a few others.[169]

In Ganjam, Jyotish Saha, Jauhar Muhammad and Ahmed Ali were arrested on 4 February for violating the “gagging order”.[170] In the first week of February, picketing was intensified at Berhampur, Ichhapur, Aska, Parala, Chikakole and Sompentha, which led to the arrest of 11 UPCC members and some more Andhra Congress workers.[171] In January 1922, Balasore also witnessed some picketing, while in Sambalpur the movement centred on the promotion of *khadi* and collection of *swaraj* funds in weekly *haat*s[172] and resistance to settlement operations.[173]

During the period, the no-rent campaign became intensified in Kanika, a zamindari estate within British Orissa, which had been one of the worst victims of feudal oppression in Orissa. The zamindar, locally called the raja, conducted a “private” land settlement and hiked the rent, which was already beyond the paying capacity of the ryots. Besides, peculiar taxes such as fish tax, buffalo

[167] *Searchlight*, 10 February 1922; *Samaj*, 11 February 1922.
[168] *Samaj*, 4 February 1922.
[169] *Searchlight*, 10 February 1922; *Seba*, 11 February 1922.
[170] *Searchlight*, 10 February 1922.
[171] *Samaj*, 8 April 1922.
[172] *Seba*, 4 February 1922; *Searchlight*, 8 March 1922.
[173] FRBO, File No. 18 of January1922, *Home Poll.*

grazing tax, honeymoon tax, hair cutting tax, were being regularly collected using coercive methods.[174] Against this background, the Congress movement proved quite helpful to the ryots, as it promised a no-rent campaign and non-payment of all obnoxious taxes. "*Swaraj* tenants", as tenants who had become Congress members were locally called, were reportedly assured of exemption from payment of rent. Further, in case of exigencies, the ryots believed, the *Gandhi sena* would come from Ranchi to their rescue.[175] As a result of the perceived immunity, some 400 members were enrolled into the Congress, many *charkha*s distributed and some *swaraj* funds collected by January 1922. The village revenue officers, called *mustagir*s, being deprived of many of their conventional privileges under the new settlement, were behind the Congress agitation against the raja.[176]

The no-rent campaign in Kanika had two aspects. While some ryots, responding to the Congress call, did not pay any rent, many others did pay up but at the pre-revised rate, at Kendrapada sub-treasury under a provision of the Orissa Tenancy Act.[177] The Congress meetings, particularly the one at Ayetan village on 20 January, was so massive that the police issued prohibitory orders, which compelled the Congress to shift its office to Madhapur, another village on the border of the estate.[178]

Though activists mainly from Balasore and Cuttack DCC were involved, the Kanika Movement had the blessings of the provincial leadership. The *Samaj* and the *Seba* highlighted the growing success of the agitation there.[179] The UPCC saw the Kanika campaign as a model and planned to extend such no-rent campaigns to other nationalist pockets. To take a decision to that effect a meeting was called at Cuttack on 12 February 1922.[180]

[174] Das, "Kanika Peasants", p. 158.
[175] *Ibid*., pp. 158–59.
[176] *Ibid*., pp. 148, 159.
[177] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 61.
[178] *Samaj*, 25 February 1922.
[179] *Samaj*, 28 January 1922; *Seba*, 4 February 1922.
[180] *Searchlight*, 12 February 1922.

On 5 February 1922, some 22 policemen were killed in mob violence at Chauri Chaura in United Province (UP). Following this, the CWC called off the proposed CDM and confined the NCM to a few constructive programmes. The "Chauri Chaura episode" virtually put a brake on the movement.

In Orissa, the nationalist press and some elder leaders condemned the violence and justified the suspension of the ensuing CDM. The *Samaj* said that maintaining peace was the primary duty of the non-cooperators and if that was not done, *swaraj* was not its worth.[181] The *Seba* described the killing of police personnel as "*saytani*" (barbarism), as the fight for *swaraj* was essentially a "peace-war". "Use of weapon would scatter us away like pieces of straw in the great current of a river, for we do not have sufficient weapons in 'our' hands", it warned.[182] Gopabandhu condemned the violence and cautioned that it would delay the attainment of *swaraj*.[183] Earlier, referring to the violence in Bombay and Madras, he had asked Congressmen not to let such incidents happen in Orissa, as "*swaraj* could not be sustained by an indisciplined body and loose mind".[184] The suspension of the CDM did not surprise him. He hoped it would recommence at an appropriate time, "for it was not a children's game".[185]

The other section of the Congress, mostly students and the youth, however, strongly resented the unilateral decision to suspend the movement,[186] and wondered why the no-rent campaign was stopped in Bardoli when violence had occurred in far off Chauri Chaura.[187] When the UPCC met at Cuttack on 5 March 1922, heated debates were witnessed between the two sections with Gopabandhu appealing to all to "take an optimistic view of the Bardoli resolution".[188]

[181] *Samaj*, 18 February 1922.
[182] *Seba*, 18 February 1922.
[183] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 18 February 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 267.
[184] *Samaj*, 28 January 1922.
[185] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 18 February 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 266.
[186] *Samaj*, 18 February 1922.
[187] *Seba*, 18 February 1922.
[188] *Searchlight*, 19 March 1922.

The virtual suspension of the NCM was, however, like a "*thaharo*" (halt) call given by the general of an army.[189] For Gopabandhu it was a tactical move. "A step backward could not be tantamount to defeat. A backward move was as important as a step forward in a war", though the reason would be "best known to the general alone".[190]

Following the Bardoli resolution, the Kanika agitation, which had been already launched, now laid stress on "defensive" civil disobedience. This meant payment of rent at the pre-revised rate rather than "no-rent" payment. The Congress office at Ayetan and Madhapur in the estate were shifted to Chandbali, on the outskirts of the estate.[191] To off-set the all-India party control, the UPCC also proposed to organize a princely states' People Conference for mobilizing the people of Kanika and other princely states.[192] On the advice of the UPCC, the Balasore DCC took charge of Kanika, which until then had been functioning under both Cuttack and Balasore DCCs. This helped streamline coordination work in Kanika.[193] In its meeting at Cuttack on 6 March 1922, the UPCC constituted a committee with Bhagirathi Mahapatra and A.B. Acharya as members to formally accord permission to the "defensive" civil disobedience agitation in Kanika.[194]

The reversal in national politics, however, did not seem to have much effect on the Kanika ryots who, under the auspices of the local Congress, integrated their agrarian issues with non-cooperation and celebrated the *satyagraha* week from 6–13 April 1922. The villages held *gram sabha*s to be coordinated by a *praja-mahasabha* at the estate level. During the *satyagraha* week, the s*abha*s campaigned for payment of rent at the old pre-revised rate. Forest laws were flouted, the civil court peons who served notices to "rent-defaulters" were assaulted, some five ryots arrested by the Kendrapada police were rescued and some estate officials were

[189] *Seba*, 18 February 1922.
[190] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 4 March 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 279–80.
[191] *Samaj*, 8 April 1922.
[192] *Samaj*, 18 February 1922.
[193] *Samaj*, 8 April, 1922.
[194] *Searchlight*, 19 March 1922; *Samaj*, 11 March 1922.

forced to wear *khadi* in place of their *khaki* uniforms. Finally, on 13 April 1922, the celebrations culminated with a general *hartal* along with *bhajan*s and *kirtan*s, slogan shouting and processions—a kind of victory march—from Chandbali to Ghanteswar, a village within Kanika.[195]

The ryots' sense of victory got a fresh boost when they rescued one Padan Jena, a ryot arrested for non-payment of rent on 18 April, who could not be rearrested by the police on 21 April despite the Cuttack Superintendent of Police's visit to his village, Patarpur. When a large contingent of police reappeared on 23 April, as per the directives of the *praja mahasaba*, the ryots, with a sense of immunity, put up barricades to obstruct the movement of the police. Consequently, there was police firing in which two ryots, Basu and Basuni died and many more injured.[196]

After the police firing, the Kanika agitation, a unique experiment, which synthesized both the non-cooperation ideals and local agrarian issues in Orissa, witnessed ruthless suppression. Some 150 ryots were arrested; many leaders' properties were confiscated. Those who were hosting the Congress volunteers coming from British Orissa were badly beaten up by the police in late May.[197]

The Congress, on the other land, condemned the police firing and the indiscriminate arrests in Kanika at its Bhadrak conference on 16 and 17 May 1922. The UPCC, while meeting at Balasore on 14 May, formed a committee for an independent enquiry into the Kanika atrocities.[198] On 31 May, Gopabandhu Das, the head of the proposed committee, was arrested and the Congress offices at Kendrapada, Cuttack, and Balasore were raided.[199]

Curiously, while the Kanika raja, Rajendra Narayan Bhanjdeo, a loyalist leader of the UUC, described the agitation as a part of the NCM so as to seal off the agrarian discontent, the Congress, despite its intimate involvement, formally disowned it purely as a tactical

[195] *Searchlight*, 16 June 1922; FRBO, File No. 18 of April 1922, *Home Poll*; *Samaj*, 22 April 1922.
[196] *Searchlight*, 16 June 1922; Das, "Kanika Peasants", p. 162.
[197] *UD*, 24 May 1922; *Samaj*, 6 May 1922.
[198] *Samaj*, 20 May 1922; *Searchlight*, 4 June 1922.
[199] *Samaj*, 6 May and 10 June 1922.

move so as to expose the feudal oppression there. "Was the Kanika *meli* that broke out some 20 years ago a handiwork of the non-cooperators? Are the *meli*s in other *gadjat*s instigated by the Congress?" it asked.[200] The statement by Madhusudan Patnaik, a prime accused, during his trial at Kendrapara court in 1922, however, read: "As regards Kanika, when the tenants had been paying the rent for the last six years and when they have suspended it this year, it is clear that the all India movement is solely responsible. While I was in charge of this part of India, I am responsible for breach of peace [sic]".[201]

Outside Kanika, the constructive programmes, especially those related to the panchayats, prohibition and national schools caught the nationalists' attention during the post-Chauri Chaura period. On 5 and 6 March 1922, the UPCC met at Cuttack and resolved to collect *swaraj* funds to the tune of Rs 50,000 and to enroll 100,000 new primary members by 30 June 1922. The target, as earlier, remained unfulfilled.[202] In Balasore, where the DCC withstood the setback and met on 12 March, the *swaraj* panchayats were coordinated under the *mahasabha* at the block level and *biratsabha* at the district level.[203] Unaffected by "Chauri Chaura", in late February 1922, the Basta *mahasabha* coordinating 10 *swaraj* panchayats under the leadership of Rajkishor Patra, issued notices to shopkeepers to refrain from selling foreign cloth and to parents not to send their wards to government schools.[204] In the villages of Cuttack such as Madhuban, Arilo, Patia, Tangi and Olakana, promotion of *khadi* sale and maintenance of general security during the *mela* days became the prime concern of the *swaraj* panchayat and volunteers in March 1922.[205]

As the "untouchables" were considered to be the obvious addicts and victims of liquor, the campaign against untouchablility with the issue of prohibition converged in many places. At Jaleswar and

[200] *Samaj*, 13 May 1922.
[201] Quoted in Das, "Kanika Peasants", p. 166.
[202] *Searchlight*, 19 March 1922; *Samaj*, 11 March 1922.
[203] *Samaj*, 18 March 1922.
[204] *Samaj*, 4 March 1922.
[205] *Samaj*, 25 March 1922.

Bateswar in Balasore and Chachinda in Athgarh, Congressmen mobilized the *bauri*s, an "untouchable" community, to hold meetings where oaths were taken under the guidance of their *pradhan*s and *behera*s (community leaders) to give up alcohol and to wear *khadi*.[206] Similar meetings of sweepers and "c*hamars*" were held in Sambalpur during the *satyagraha* week in 1922. Dharanidhar Mishra, a DCC leader and a Brahmin by caste, held *bhagabat path* in between the meetings which were generally organized in the "low" caste localities.[207]

Visits by caste Hindus to "low caste" localities and their interaction with the "untouchables" was no less a reformatory measure in a caste-ridden society like Orissa. Such meetings and interactions helped politicize the "low" caste people to a great extent as is evident in the following report published in the nationalist press. On 6 May, when the Laikera (Sambalpur) police summoned one Ratnakar, a Congress worker from Jhirlipali who was instrumental in such a collective oath-taking ceremony for prohibition, to the *thana*, the *ganda*s, an "untouchable" community of the village, marched to the *thana* en masse and communicated to the police that they had given up "drinking" on their own. Further, if the government desired them to drink, it should supply liquor free of cost.[208] The sense of fearlessness and concern for a caste Hindu Congress worker among the "low" caste people showed the solidity of such mobilization.

With regard to schools, the USSP, formed earlier to coordinate the activities of the national schools in the state, was reorganized in early February 1922. A new curriculum was framed with special emphasis on vocational training in agriculture and carpentry, physical training, newspaper reading and learning of Hindi. At the secondary level, a course on the Indian freedom struggle was introduced.[209] Between 3–8 April, the USSP was to hold annual examinations at seven centres. They were *Satyavadi*, Cuttack,

[206] *Samaj*, 1 April 1922; *Samaj*, 15 April 1922.
[207] *Samaj*, 15 April 1922; *Searchlight*, 19 April 1922.
[208] *Searchlight*, 24 May 1922.
[209] *Samaj*, 4 February 1922.

Sambalpur, Jagatsinghpur, Balasore, Chakradharpur and Berhampur.[210] Besides, two new schools were started at Binjharpur (Cuttack) and Budhipadar (Jharsuguda),[211] while the *Satyavadi* proposed to upgrade the school to a national college in early June 1922.[212]

Despite the few programmes taken up intermittently, the NCM as a whole was adversely affected in Orissa after the "Chauri Chaura incident". In Sambalpur, where the Congress had been strong from the very start, party work dwindled due to shortage of workers during the *Satyagraha* week.[213] For want of persuasion many shopkeepers ignored the call for *hartal* and opened their shops on 13 April 1922. Finally, the Sambalpur National School was closed due to lack of funds in early June 1922.[214]

The *Seba* did not report on the Congress "as there was no news" of the party.[215] In its meeting on 14 May 1922, the UPCC resolved "not to take the responsibility of organizing the annual session of the UUC", "a s*waraj* institution", "due to lack of manpower". On 12 June, it further decided to "suspend the work of Oriya labour union in Calcutta" and to hand over the responsibility to the Calcutta Barabazaar branch of the Congress until the situation improved.[216] The decline in activity was so steep that after Gopabandhu's arrest in May 1922, the committee formed to enquire into the Kanika atrocities could not be re-formed.

In many places, the decline was mainly due to police repression. For example, in Kanika, 150 people arrested after the police firing were not let out on bail until the trial got over in mid-June. Further, 144 of them were convicted—their conviction ranging from a monetary fine of Rs 10 to a year's rigorous imprisonment.[217] Besides, leaders like Dinabandhu Khandaitray, Jayram Ray and

[210] *Samaj*, 11 March 1922.
[211] *Searchlight*, 17 May 1922.
[212] *Samaj*, 10 June 1922.
[213] *Seba*, 15 April 1922.
[214] *Searchlight*, 19 April 1922; *Searchlight*, 24 May 1922; *Seba*, 10 June 1922.
[215] *Seba*, 3 June 1922.
[216] *Searchlight*, 18 June 1922.
[217] Das, "Kanika Peasants", p. 163.

Anand Jena were expelled from the estate, their properties confiscated and families tortured. The innocent tenants who had become primary members of the Congress in the hope of getting rent exemption were summoned to the *raj kuchery* and beaten up mercilessly by the police.[218] While the *Samaj* described the atrocities as "army rule", the S*eba* compared Kanika to "Jalianwalabagh" and the worst happening in "*kaliyug*".[219]

The repression in other places was no less horrendous. Congress leaders and activists were arrested and offices raided. Since most of the activists opted against bail, they spent the entire period of the trial in jail, which crippled party work. The arrest of Laxmi Narayan Mishra, a national school student, at Bargarh on 31 March 1922, is an example. Mishra not only refused to take bail, but also preferred an imprisonment of one month to a fine of Rs 50. Further, when his relatives paid the fine, he wrote to the court saying that nobody could deposit the fine on his behalf and he should be taken back to jail.[220]

The police scare greatly blocked the recruitment of new cadres to the movement in mid-1922. At the behest of the police, the *chowkidar*s announced in the villages of Jajpur that the shouting of pro-Gandhi slogans would lead to imprisonment for six months or a fine of Rs 1,000. This happened in March 1922 when the Congress planned to observe "Gandhi Visit Day" in Orissa.[221] In late June 1922, four students were rusticated from the Khurda School for their reported visit to the Congress *ashram*.[222] Having raided the Congress offices and *ashram*s in early August, the police warned the local people against helping the non-cooperaters.[223] An impression was created that the Congress was an illegal body. In late July, the Puri DCC had to issue public statements to allay such apprehensions. But people were gripped with fear by then.[224]

[218] *Seba*, 24 June 1922.
[219] *Samaj*, 6 May 1922; *Seba*, 6 May 1922.
[220] *Searchlight*, 24 May 1922.
[221] *Samaj*, 25 March 1922.
[222] *Samaj*, 1 July 1922.
[223] *Samaj*, 5 August 1922.
[224] *Samaj*, 26 August 1922.

As the press complained, the police resorted to incendiaries as a form of repression in many nationalist pockets. Beginning in Cuttack from 17 March, large-scale incendiaries spread to Puri, Kakatpur, Khurda, and Begunia and hundreds of homes were set on fire.[225] In Cuttack alone this continued till 28 March. Armed with public support, the Congress volunteers formed defence squads. Subsequently, there were two incidents where some police constables were caught committing the crime. They were beaten up badly and produced at the Cuttack *Swaraj Ashram* for trial by a jury consisting of Congress leaders such as Gopabandhu Chaudhury and Bhagirathi Mahapatra.[226] The police was socially boycotted to such an extent that in a joint letter the police constables in Cuttack threatened to resign en masse if the non-cooperators were not punished adequately.[227]

Besides repression, disillusionment in the rank and file greatly contributed to the decline of the movement. As early as in February 1922, people began to question the rationale of the movement, when *swaraj* was not attained and the payment of land revenue continued.[228] In Kanika, the hope of "rent exemption" had brought many ryots in as members of the Congress. The commencement of the no-rent campaign confirmed their hopes in January 1922. However, the "defensive" CDM asking the ryots to make payment of rent at old rates after the Bardoli resolution in February and finally the total abandonment of the movement after the police firing in April 1922, greatly disillusioned the people there.

In defence, the nationalists described *swaraj* as a "state of mind" the attainment of which depended on the amount of "fearlessness created" within. Besides, as the nationalists asserted, the police and the court were no longer symbols of fear among the people because of the NCM. The country was becoming united, with both

[225] *Samaj*, 15 April, 22 April and 20 May 1922; *Searchlight,* 7 April 1922; *Seba*, 8 and 15 April 1922.
[226] FRBO, File No. 18 of 1922, March, *Home Poll.*
[227] *Ibid*.
[228] *Seba*, 4 February 1922.

Hindus and Muslims going to jail together for a common cause. These were seen as great successes for the movement.[229] Gopabandhu felt that the NCM created an all-India feeling against the myth that unity was impossible among the people because of their varied languages, religions and castes.[230] When the liberals alleged that the Oriya movement suffered a premature demise due to the launching of the NCM, Gopabandhu reaffirmed that the *swaraj* movement had saved Orissa from isolation and from growing into a hotbed of parochialism. Orissa's gain lay in her integration into the motions and emotions of India, he wrote after his arrest in May 1922.[231]

Such rhetoric, however, did not help the party to overcome the sense of disilliusionment during the period. This was evident from the fact that the UPCC, which had nominated Jaminikant Biswas as party secretary at the Cuttack meeting on 12 June 1922, had to convene another meeting on 22 June to change the nomination since Biswas declined to accept the office. Instead, Harekrishna Mahatab was nominated, only to be arrested on 30 June 1922.[232] After June 1922, there was no news about the movement either in the vernacular press or in the government sources. This probably marked the sad end of the non-cooperation phase in Orissa.

II

Clearly the NCM was the first major mass movement in Orissa. With the launching of the movement, the nationalists of the state came into formal contact with the Congress movement outside. During the pre-NCM phase, the UUC, the local political movement, was largely confined to the educated class and concentrated on regional problems. The provincial Congress, which succeeded it, not only extended the movement beyond its educated middle-class base, but also stretched it beyond the regional geographical

[229] *Seba*, 21 January 1922.
[230] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 8 April 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 301.
[231] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 10 June 1922, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 323.
[232] *Searchlight*, 18 June and 30 June 1922.

boundary by integrating it into the all-India movement. This was probably one of the most significant features of the NCM in Orissa.

In terms of participation, students formed the base of the movement in the state. Barring a few, the leadership was primarily drawn from among students, many of whom left their studies altogether to join the movement and to work for the Congress. Many other students withdrew from government schools and joined the national schools. Then, there was a third category of students who continued to study in government schools, but occasionally organized strikes and *hartal*s, visited the Congress offices and *ashram*s regularly and helped the party to carry forward its programmes at the local level.

The students who left their schools and colleges soon after the launch of the NCM were already well conversant with the nationalist ideals. Most of them had attended the Nagpur Congress and the Chakradharpur UUC in 1920. After joining the NCM, they worked as teachers in various national schools and got involved in Congress campaigns. Some such young leaders were Harekrishna Mahatab, Jadumani Mangaraj, Rajkrishna Bose, Nabakrishna Choudhury and Banchhanidhi Mohanty. Students who left government schools to join the national schools were no less active. As national school students they participated in the NCM and, after the decline of their schools, worked for the Congress ideals. For example, Laxmi Narayan Mishra became the secretary of the Sambalpur DCC, while Krutartha Acharya was devoted full-time to a *swadeshi* endeavour, the Sambalpuri handloom industry.[233]

The Congress leadership had endorsed the students' involvement. In February 1921, Gopabandhu asked them to "de-educate" themselves from classroom instructions and to join the *swaraj* campaign, which was "the best education at the moment".[234] While addressing the students in Cuttack, Gandhi ratified this view and prescribed "boycott" and campaign for *swaraj* to all students, including those who were studying medicine.[235]

[233] *Sadhana*, 5 February 1923.
[234] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 5 February 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 26–27.
[235] *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 31 March 1921, in *CWMG*, Vol. XIX, p. 476.

The UPCC leaders, who were not fresh from school and college, included lawyers such as Gopabandhu Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Chandra Sekhar Behera, Ram Narayan Mishra, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Dhanpati Banerjee. Some of these lawyers did not give up their practice, but lent support to the movement in their own way. One such lawyer was Dhanpati Banerjee of Puri who regularly spun cloth at home and propagated *swadeshi*.[236] In Cuttack, at the non-cooperators' initiative, some such practising lawyers formed a committee to enquire into the atrocities perpetrated by police constables at the market in March 1922.[237] Another sympathetic lawyer, Sachidanand Chatterjee, appearing for the police demanded Rs 50 per hearing against his normal fee of Rs 15.[238]

However, the lawyers as a class were never trusted as participants in the movement. This was more so because of their identification with the liberals. Gopabandhu, a lawyer himself, attributed the relative failure of the movement to the lawyers. If they had boycotted the courts en masse, like their colleagues outside Orissa, it would have proved the meaninglessness of colonial courts and the efficacy of *swaraj* and panchayats. Moreover, their social status would have put the stamp of maturity on the NCM in Orissa.[239] Laxmi Narayan Mishra from Sambalpur was forthright in his criticism of the lawyers, who, he said, joined the NCM initially, but backed out subsequently. "It is due to their betrayal that the local national school was closed in Sambalpur". Writing in 1923, he even condemned the profession as "anti-national" and the lawyers as a class of "selfish people".[240]

Some government officials and school teachers resigned from service during the movement. Prominent among them were Gopabandhu Choudhury, Birakishor Das, Madhusudan Biswal, Sribatsa Panda, Nilakantha Das and Lingaraj Mishra. Politicization of many of these officials began long before the actual launch of

[236] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 20 August 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 144.
[237] File No. 535, 1921, dated 3 April 1921, *Political Department Special Section*, B&O Government.
[238] *Ibid*.
[239] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 20 August 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 143–44.
[240] *Sadhana*, 5 February 1923.

the NCM. Nilakantha Das and Lingaraj Mishra had been instrumental in the building of *Satyavadi* since the *swadeshi* movement days. Sribatsa Panda contributed articles on the relevance of *swaraj* panchayats in December 1920 and Harihar Panda had co-authored a book on the Oriya Movement in 1919.[241]

The political motivation of many others could be best explained through the examples such as Gopabandhu Choudhury, who resigned from the post of deputy collector to join the NCM. Choudhury hailed from a political family; both his father, Gokulananda Chowdhury, and father-in-law, Gopal Ballabh Das (brother of Madhusudan Das), being prominent leaders of the UUC. His younger brother, Nabakrishna Choudhury, was a pioneer of the *Bharati Mandir* group of nationalists and had left college in January 1921. Even as deputy collector Choudhury used *khadi* and had taken Gandhiji as his political ideal.[242] In September 1920, as the flood relief officer, he was asked to overplay the role of government relief work and underplay the plight of the victims in Bari-Jajpur. He refused to comply and subsequently resigned from service in early 1921.[243] His disillusionment with his official tenure was in a way outbalanced by his enthusiasm for and participation in the NCM.

Some other teachers and officials did not give up their offices, but were of immense help to the movement. In fact, the mass involvement of students in Sambalpur since early 1921 was probably due to their teachers such as Dibyasingh Mishra, who was reported "to have been discussing current politics in class" and inculcating "seditious ideas in the students' minds". Consequently, he was suspended in March 1918.[244] Another such teacher was Madhusudan Das, the head master of the Sambalpur Zilla School, who had full "sympathy" for the Congress and its movement.[245] But for the support of such people, a positive

[241] *Utkal Sevak*, 16 December 1920; Two Bachelor of Arts, *The Oriya Movement*.
[242] Gopinath Mohanti, *Dhuli Matir Santha* (biography of Gopabandhu Choudhury), Cuttack, 1985, p. 31.
[243] Rama Devi, *Mo Jivana Pathe*, pp. 42, 48.
[244] File No. 165, March 1918, *Poll Special*, B&O Government.
[245] Das, *Nilakantha Granthavali*, p. 88.

environment towards the NCM could not have been easily created in educational institutions. Godavarish Mishra recollected how a Muslim police sub-inspector requested him to begin the non-cooperation stir in Chakradharpur and donated Rs 41 for the initial expenditure of the movement. Suresh Chandra Bose, brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, was working as the second officer in the Khurda sub-division of Puri district during the period. He described how two of his senior colleagues, Ajay Chandra Das (Deputy Magistrate, Khurda) and Tribikram Pujari (Deputy Magistrate, Puri Sadar), used pretexts after pretexts to not try the defamation case against Gopabandhu Das in their courts, for that would defame them "in the nationalist history of Orissa". The police had filed "a false case" under section 449 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code against Gopabandhu Das, the printer, publisher and editor of Samaj, "for publication of a defamatory news item in the name of Begunia police" in late 1921. Finally the case was tried in the court of Bose, who acquitted the accused. Bose could dare to do this, despite the pressure from higher officials like Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police and Legal Remembrance of B&O for awarding punishment to the accused.[246]

Another strong base of the NCM was the local Muslim community. The Khilafat issue had been well-integrated with the NCM since 1920. Hence, communal amity and solidarity was apparent throughout the period. The Khilafat Committee and the Congress were interdependent in all Muslim pockets like Samabalpur, Bhadrak and Cuttack. Often their methods and outcome were identical. Dr Ekram Rasul, the vice-president of the UPCC, was the president of the Orissa Khilafat Committee.[247] Similarly, Gopabandhu Das and Mazhar-ul-Haq, the Khilafat leader from Patna, addressed public meetings together on many occasions.[248] The NCM became invariably strong in those places

[246] Godavarish Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, Vol. IV, Cuttack, 1972, p. 120; The full text of the writing of Suresh Chandra Bose is reproduced in *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 457–84.
[247] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 49.
[248] *Seba*, 25 June 1921.

where there was a sizeable Muslim population. This was so because the Muslim middle class supported the Khilafat or the NCM en masse, unlike its Hindu counterpart. Thus, the Muslims boycotted the elections en block in Sambalpur in November 1920.

Women's participation was quite marginal. Barring a few relatives of the nationalist leaders such as Rama Devi, wife of Gopabandhu Choudhury, and Sarala Devi, wife of Bhagirathi Mahapatra, women seemed to have been inactive in the NCM in Orissa. There was not much effort for their mobilization either.

An appeal was made to the *sramajibi*, who included industrial labourers as well as other toiling masses like agricultural labourers, small peasants, urban wage earners and vendors to join the movement, or else "others" would hijack them.[249] The mobilization of the Oriya labourers in Calcutta, the porters and loaders in Puri and the *kinikhia*s in Sambalpur was quite effective. On the other hand, the issues of no-rent campaign, especially in Kanika, and the boycott of settlement operations in Sambalpur and so on, converged with the NCM. This not only brought the peasantry to the forefront, but also reflected the relative autonomy of the movement at the local level. The movement became vibrant and "un-alien" largely due to such creative use of regional specificities.

However, the tribals, despite constituting a major section of the states' population, seem to have been conspicuous by their absence in the movement. The main reason for this was probably the lack of the nationalists' understanding of their complexities. The tribals had a long tradition of defiance against changes brought about by the colonial rule. The native princes and the bureaucracy acting as agents of these changes were their targets of attack. But at another level, unlike the Hindu ryots, they also fought caste Hindu domination.[250] Most of the nationalist leaders being caste Hindus

[249] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 10 December 1921, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 222.

[250] See K. Mojumdar, "The Ganjam Agency, 1839–1900: Some Problems of Tribal Administration", in P.K. Mishra, ed., *Culture, Tribal, History and Freedom Movement*, New Delhi, 1989; F. Deo, "Differential Response of Tribal Groups of Nawapara Sub-Division to External Pressure", in *Orissa History Congress Proceedings*, Vol. XV, Bhubaneswar, 1989. Deo discusses the responses to external pressure of tribal groups of Nawapara Sub-division in Kalahandi District.

themselves could not adequately address this complex tribal question. Hence, there were no tribals in the Congress leadership, nor did they occupy any other prominent position then. However, as a part of the rural peasantry, and not as distinct tribal groups, there might have been some tribal participation in various non-cooperation programmes. Unfortunately, the available sources do not speak about it.

The attitude of the traders, princes and zamindars towards the movement was quite indifferent during the period. As early as in January 1921, the district magistrates were instructed to remind "the men of property" that they would be the first to suffer "if the bounds of law and order were broken". The sub-divisional officers were asked to put aside all other work "for the moment" and widely tour to convey the message.[251] Such official hostility endorsed the general apathy of the propertied classes towards non-cooperation in Orissa. The UPCC's failure to subscribe the required amount to the *swaraj* fund was mainly due to lack of support from the propertied class.

The nationalists, on the other hand, tried to bring them into the Congress fold. This was evident from Gandhi's meeting with the Marwaris and Gujaratis, the trading community in Orissa, at Cuttack in March 1921. Despite this, the traders did not become a part of the movement. They closed shops during *hartal*s and stopped selling foreign cloth only when and where the boycott campaign was intensified and the Congress activists very persuasive. Thus, in April 1922 they did not participate in the movement and opened their shops during the *hartal* in Sambalpur because the movement was on its decline.[252]

The antipathy of the princes and zamindars was quite well-known. The more vocal among them formed the loyalist group and supported the government by countering the NCM in Orissa. They described the NCM as a "disease" and thanked all those people "who were not affected by it".[253] However, they praised Gandhi

[251] File No. 144 of 1921, 31 January1921, *Poll Special*, B&O government.
[252] *Searchlight,* 19 April 1922.
[253] *Gadjat Basini*, 12 March 1921.

only "for his prohibition campaign" which could "materially help the 'low' class people" and referred to "Gopabandhu and his colleagues" as basically "devoted people except for their non-cooperation programme".[254]

The NCM assumed varied forms both in terms of their number as well as their nature. Meetings, processions, sloganeering followed by fund collection, membership drives, formation of committees and passing of resolutions were the main forms of the movement. Meetings were usually preceded by processions and slogan shouting. Meetings addressed by non-local leaders attracted bigger crowds. Thus, "the maulana saab's [he came from Nagpur; his name is not mentioned] meeting" had to be arranged at Balibandha, a bigger ground, and not at the Somnath Temple complex at Sambalpur, in November 1920. Sometimes, the meetings were hastily organized "without any decorum being maintained there". The speakers made speeches in local dialects, especially in Sambalpur, and "cracked crude jokes at the cost of the authorities". The *Swaraj Bhaya Albat Hoga* (mentioned earlier) was sung without any rhyme or rhythm, complained the press.[255] The impact of public meetings, however, could be judged from the fact that while in Cuttack the people were warned against attending the "*Gandhiwala*" meeting on 29 May 1921, in rural Sambalpur the police threatened to put all those who attended meetings in jail for six months.[256]

The establishment of *swaraj* panchayats was another popular form the NCM took in Orissa. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee headed by Motilal Nehru in late 1922 reported that Orissa had in all 600 such panchayats out of which some 50 functioned even in August 1922.[257] Though some of these might have been the same as the traditional village panchayats, the nationalists' hold over them could not be questioned. Moreover,

[254] *Gadjat Basini,* 5 March and 2 April 1921.
[255] *US*, 20 January 1921.
[256] *Seba*, 4 June 1921.
[257] Ravinder Kumar, ed., *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru,* Vol. III, New Delhi, 1984, Appendix V, p. 134.

all these panchayats served the nationalists' purpose, for they undermined the colonial courts and settled disputes at the local level. At times, as in Bhadrak, even the rural zamindars approached the *swaraj* panchayat for "justice".[258] The increasing strength of the panchayat was further proved by the fact that the police filed criminal cases against some of them in mid-1921.[259]

The campaign for *swadeshi*, which primarily meant promotion of *khadi* and handloom cloth, use of *charkha* and growing of cotton, was another important form of the movement. The UPCC directed the DCCs to have a separate *khadi* cell for the purpose.[260] The *Tanti Bahuna* (Woes of the Weaver) and *Arat Geet* (Charkha Song) describing the decline of handicrafts during British rule and the relevance of *charkha* were published and sold in markets by Congress workers.[261]

The impact of the *swadeshi* campaign was far-reaching. In Sambalpur, it led to the promotion of the local handloom industry, which was dying due to the colonial trade policies. Thousands of weavers, locally called *tanti*, belonging to the "low" castes had been either forced to beg, reduced to the status of landless labouers, or forced to migrate to the tea gardens of Assam.[262] Krutartha Acharya, who left his schooling in 1921, organized them and made Sambalpuri handloom a "respectable means of living". During the movement, *khadi* was so strongly identified with *swaraj* that the local authorities threatened to dismiss a clerk who refused to give it up in Jajpur in March 1922.[263]

Bonfires of foreign cloth as a form of protest was new and appealing to the young workers, but often symbolic due to the costs involved. Thus, on Tilak *Utsav* (1 August 1921) at Cuttack, only one piece of foreign cloth was put to fire during every interval between public speeches.[264] *Kirtan* was another interesting form

[258] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 49.
[259] *Samaj*, 22 October 1921.
[260] *Searchlight*, 12 June 1922.
[261] *Seba*, 27 August 1921.
[262] *Sadhana*, 1 December 1927.
[263] *Seba*, 25 March 1922.
[264] *Seba*, 6 August 1921.

that evolved locally in Orissa. Traditionally, most of the villages had *kirtan* troupes who would dance and sing *bhajan*s on festive occasions. Such troupes were mobilized for welcoming Congress leaders during processions and for escorting arrested leaders to the court and to jail. Besides, many nationalist songs composed by poets like Banchhanidhi Mohanty and Birakishor Das were sung in the *kirtan* form, especially in Balasore district where these poet-activists worked. There are also reports of *swadeshi kirtan*s which exhibited the *charkha* in place of the portrait of deities at the time of processions. *Kirtan* troupes accompanying Congress leaders undoubtedly provided a wider social base to the movement during the period.

Various nationalist institutions such as national schools, *ashram*s, and *khadi* centres and vernacular newspapers came into being during the NCM in Orissa. The sustenance of these institutions depended largely on the state of the movement in the region. The national schools, which came up mainly in three phases, that is, immediately after the launch of the NCM, in mid-1921 and finally, in early 1922 when the movement was at its peak, were generally managed by the local community. A citizens' committee was formed in Sambalpur for the purpose. Similarly, the *Utkal Samaj* in Chakradharpur took care of the schools there. Community participation was conspicuous in *Satyavadi* since its inception. While in *Satyavadi*, Sambalpur and Cuttack the schools were started as alternative learning institutions to counterbalance the government schools, in many interior villages, with no schools around, they were the only forum for spreading literacy and imparting education. In order to coordinate their curricular activities, the UPCC formed one USSP, which conducted the annual examination in some selected centres.

Though the schools promised to help the pupils become "self-dependent in two years time",[265] barring a few classes on spinning and moral education and discussions on contemporary political developments in their daily routine and some participation in the

[265] Advertisement of the Sambalpur National School, in *Seba*, 18 May 1921.

freedom movement, they were not very different from government schools either in terms of their syllabus or in actual classroom teaching. Still, they played a significant role by providing a forum to the students and youth for ventilating their patriotic fervour. Because of the national schools, the students and their young teachers could participate in all Congress programmes unhesitatingly while continuing their education. As the Motilal Nehru Committee reported, there still remained five high schools and five primary schools with 54 teachers in August 1922.[266]

The *ashram*s, *khadi* centres and Congress offices were often located in the same place and served a common cause. They had local names such as *Swaraj Ashram*, *Swaraj Alaya* and *Swaraj Mandir*. As the Motilal Nehru Committee reported, 25 such centres functioned in the state in August 1922.[267] Many of these centres were also training grounds for weaving and spinning. While in Cuttack the *ashram* functioned in a house taken on nominal rent, in many other places the activists declared their own homes as *ashram*s and offered them as venues for party work.[268]

The NCM was a boon to the vernacular press in Orissa. On the eve of the NCM, the S*amaj* (October 1919) and the *Utkal Sevak* (1920) were brought out from *Satyavadi* and Sambalpur respectively. They were followed by the *Seba* (May 1921) and the *Swarajya Samachar* (mid-1921) from Sambalpur and Balasore respectively. All these were Congress organs in the state. A few others like the *Utkal Dipika* (Cuttack), *Prajamitra* (Aska), *Sakti* (Puri) and *Puribasi* (Puri) had been there before, and were strong supporters of the Congress.[269] To counter the nationalist effect, the Talcher prince brought out the *Gadjat Basini* on a regular basis.

Simple language, regularity, autonomy and missionary zeal were some of the common features of the Congress organs. The *Seba* used such simple and "un-chaste Oriya" that the liberal press accused it of being rustic. But the *Seba*, far from being shy of its

[266] See Kumar, *Selected Works of Motilal Nehru*, Vol.III, Appendix IV, p. 132.
[267] *Ibid*., p. 129.
[268] *Seba*, 6 August and 3 September 1921.
[269] File No. 37 of 1923, *Poll Special*, B&O Government.

"rusticity", considered it essential for making inroads into the countryside.[270] In April 1921, the official report attributed the success of the *Samaj* to its simple language, which it used to "preach non-cooperation". "As a result, the circulation increased and it became one of the principal newspapers in Bihar and Orissa".[271] Being outside the control of the UPCC, these newspapers, despite the fact that some of them like the *Seba* and *Swarajya Samachar* were brought out by the DCCs, were virtually autonomous institutions committed to the spread of *swaraj* ideals in their own unique style. Thus, the *Seba* equated *swaraj* with "salvation" and Gandhian philosophy with a pure religion like Buddhism.[272] The optimistic S*amaj* never noticed any decline in the Congress movement, while the *Utkal Sevak* announced that "no one in the Congress in Orissa was a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi".[273]

All these institutions—the schools, *ashram*s, *khadi* centres and the press—were interdependent; and although each of them maintained a separate machinery and followed a different style of work, their products were identical. Often they were located in a common building and it was very difficult to distinguish between their results. Their significance lay in the fact that besides articulating the Congress ideals, they absorbed the political workers, often gave them shelter and purposefully provided them a community life. This was no meagre help to the activists, who, while fighting for nationalist ideals and values, had incurred the wrath of the mighty state and, in many cases, had been ostracized by their families during the period. But for these institutions, they would have been on the brink of total alienation during the NCM.

[270] *Seba*, 19 August 1922.
[271] File No. 163 of 1921, 2 April 1921, *Poll Special*, B&O Government.
[272] *Seba*, 6 May 1922.
[273] *US*, 26 May 1921.

THREE

Aftermath of Non-Cooperation, 1923–27

The aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM) was marked by a sense of anti-climax. Many leaders as well as cadres were arrested and sent to jail. The soaring hopes of *swaraj* were belied. A sense of disaffection, disorganization and demoralization dominated the nationalist ranks. The Congress as a cohesive and homogenous movement was on the brink of disintegration. Serious differences cropped up among the leaders regarding the future course of action. The danger of the movement collapsing into passivity worried the nationalists. The process of finding an alternative strategy to sustain the movement during this non-active phase created a rift among the party activists.[1]

Soon after the suspension of the NCM, a new group within the Congress emerged under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das. Known as the Swarajists or Pro-changers, they proposed that the party should enter the legislative councils through elections with the objective of wreaking the colonial structure from within. This would make the movement come alive and advance the anti-colonial struggle. The Swarajists hoped that entry into the councils would not replace or undermine the constructive programme advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

The other section of the Congress leadership comprising people like Vallabhabhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad objected to the

[1] Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 236.

Swarajists' move and advocated the continuation of the full programme of boycott and non-cooperation, effective working of the constructive programme and quiet preparation for the resumption of the suspended CDM. Known as the No-changers and also as non-Swarajists, this group defeated the Swarajists' "council entry resolution" at the Gaya Congress in December 1922.[2] Following this, the rift between the two groups was further widened.

The Swarajists finally went ahead with their plan, formed the Swaraj Party in March 1923 and prepared to contest the forthcoming elections in November 1923. The No-changers, on the other hand, concentrated on the Gandhian constructive programme, which included promotion of *khadi* and spinning, national education and Hindu–Muslim unity and silently prepared for the ensuing civil disobedience agitation in the country.

In Orissa, the aftermath of the NCM found the UPCC in a very dormant state. Polarized into two main camps, the Swarajists and the non-Swarajists, the party witnessed the growth of regional and parochial forces at an alarming scale. Communal forces emerged conspicuously. There was acute squabbling among the leaders. Charges of embezzlement of public funds against many nationalist leaders were quite common during the period. In the absence of mass radical action, these developments showed the leaders and the movement in a very poor light. This was widely reported in the regional press. A sense of gloom seemed to reign over the nationalist environment in the state. The present discussion will focus on this.

The discussion will be divided into two main sections. The first section will focus on the issues of regionalism, factionalism, communalism and the charges of corruption and the like, whereas the second section will try to analyze the politics of the Swarajists and the non-Swarajists during the period. The nationalists' approach to and activities in the constitutional bodies, like the councils and the local self-government bodies, as well as the different aspects of the Gandhian constructive programme will also be dealt with. The period of gloom (1923–27) was, however, replaced by a period of bloom which would be focused on at a later stage.

[2] Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885–1947*, New Delhi, 1984, p. 277.

I

The active phase of non-cooperation witnessed all anti-colonial forces integrating into a common nationalist stream. Their resolve to strive for a regional identity also got adequate care in their nationalist struggle. However, the non-active phase saw the same forces trying to emerge as divergent identities opposing one another, rather than as a nationalist identity symbolizing unity and commonness. This weakened the struggle in a great way.

Closure of many national schools and Congress *ashram*s and suspension of publication of many nationalist newspapers marked the aftermath (of the NCM) in Orissa. This was accompanied by the return of quite a few proclaimed non-cooperators to the government institutions they had left earlier. In June 1922, the Sambalpur National School and in November 1922 the Cuttack School were closed due to paucity of funds as well as lack of students.[3] The Jagatsinghpur school, which continued with great difficulty till the end of 1924, was "about to be closed" in February 1925.[4] Sustenance became such a problem even for the *Satyavadi* school[5] that it decided to affiliate itself with the government in order to get funds as well as recognition "necessary for keeping up the morale" of the students. The *Satyavadi* management was reportedly compelled to take such a "harsh" decision against their strong nationalist spirit in early January 1925.[6]

[3] *Seba*, 16 December 1922.

[4] *UD*, 21 February 1925.

[5] Lack of funds and students were two major problems that adversely affected the national schools during the post-NCM period. The students showed little interest in taking admission there, because the "degree" had "no value outside". For example, the *Satyavadi* students who had done their "graduation" (the *Satyavadi* had been declared a national university by the nationalists during the NCM) had to re-write their matriculation examinations for getting entry into the government colleges. The parents, disenchanted with the developments, withdrew their wards from the school. The monetary support from the public also waned gradually. See Das, *Yugantakari Satyavadi Gurukul*, p. 164.

[6] In March 1923, Kripasindhu Mishra, the headmaster, visited Benaras and met a few nationalists interested in national education. By attending the *Bharat Siksha Sammilani* there he was hopeful of fetching some grants and an all-India recognition for the *Satyavadi*

In 1923, the *Asha* wrote that all national schools set up during the NCM in Orissa faced serious crises "after one or one and half year of their establishment". Lack of building infrastructure, funds and students were the three main problems. The paper specifically discussed the Gadagada school in the Ganjam district. Started with local initiative, the primary school's main source of income was *mustibhikshya* (alms given by the villagers for a noble cause) and a monthly donation of Rs 20 by the District Congress Committee (DCC). The economic position of the school was not sound even during the NCM. The *Asha* reported that "of late" even the meagre monetary grant had became irregular. "The DCC's donation comes only, occasionally" while the "local people are reluctant" to help. "What is said about the Gadagada school is true of all national schools" in Orissa. "Under such conditions how long can the schools run?" the paper asked.[7]

The Chakradharpur school in the outlying Singhbhum district, which was in existence since 1918, had been initiated with the primary objective of popularizing Oriya there. Godavarish Mishra, a founder of the *Satyavadi* school, had been deputed there to organize the school.[8] During the NCM, the school was converted into a national school on the lines of the *Satyavadi* School. With this the school started losing its base among the local people who had earlier supported it for its pure academic merit. After the NCM, as there was further decline, the school "reverted to its earlier goal" and resolved to concentrate on the popularization of Oriya through the imparting of education there.[9] Backed by the local Oriya-speaking people, the Orissa Movement became the main concern of the school then on. In June 1925, Anant Mishra, the president of

School. When the plan did not materialize, Gopabandhu Das, despite being in jail, mobilized some Rs 7,500 for the school from his friends in Bombay. But this was not enough. *Asha*, 19 March and 28 May 1923.

[7] *Asha*, 28 May 1923.

[8] Godavarish Mishra also described how the sources of funds soon dried up once the school was declared a national school. Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, Vol. IV, p. 118.

[9] *Sadhana*, 11 June 1915.

the Singhbhum DCC, which survived mainly due to the linguistic issue, even declared to "dissociate from the Congress so as to devote more time to the school" and to the linguistic and cultural movement.[10]

Keeping aloof from the Congress was now being considered desirable for imparting education and for sustaining the Orissa Movement in the region. Consequently, there was no DCC in Singhbhum even during the council elections of 1926.[11] Under similar situations, some schools were opened in Bhubaneswar and Badakhandi (Ganjam) purely on local initiative, but without any nationalist influence. Efforts were also made to initiate the teaching of Oriya in the existing schools in Jamshedpur. However, the organizers of these initiatives had no overt relationship with the Congress or the national movement. They often requested the "noble hearted" school inspectors to "take pity" on these schools.[12] Educational institutions that had once refused to take government help, were now soliciting help from the British. This reflected the rapid disenchantment which followed the soaring hopes of the people with regard to the achievement of *swaraj* ("within a few months").[13]

The national schools, which numbered 16 and had 732 students in July 1922, were reduced to 11 with 477 students within a year.[14] By 15 August 1924, the number further declined to 10. This included five schools in Balasore, two in Puri and one each in Cuttack, Singhbhum and Ganjam districts. Sambalpur had no national school

[10] *Sadhana*, 11 June 1915.

[11] Here what is meant by Singhbhum DCC is the unit under the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee (UPCC). As there was no DCC, the UPCC did not put up any candidate there. *Asha*, 14 June 1926.

[12] *Asha*, 30 April 1923; *UD*, 20 January 1923.

[13] The school children of Chakradharpur, for whom shouting of "Gandhi ki jey" and describing the *sarkar* as *saytan* were two apparent signs of imminent *swaraj*, were literally counting days to see the great day of *swaraj*. For them *swaraj* was only a matter of a few weeks and months. See, Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, Vol. IV, p. 120.

[14] File No. 52 of 1923, dated 31 December 1923, *Political Department*, *Special Section* (*Poll. Special*), B&O Government, Patna Archives, Patna.

since July 1923.[15] The *Satyavadi* School, despite being affiliated to the government at the time, could not be sustained and was closed down in February 1926.[16] This probably marked the end of the nationalists' experiments in the field of education in Orissa.

Many *ashram*s, which not only provided shelter and a working place for the Congress workers, but also served as production and sale centres for *khadi*, suffered a decline during the post-NCM period. In fact, in many places, the *ashram*s and schools shared the same building and their suspension came together almost for identical reasons. For instance, the *ashram*, *khadi* centre and the school at Badagada in Ganjam district suspended work together in late October 1922.[17] Similarly, the Alaka Ashram and the Alaka School, which started together on the banks of river Alaka in March 1921 and shared the same building, were closed down at Jagatsinghpur in February 1925.[18] The *ashram* and the national school started in Parlakhemundi on the occasion of Gopabandhu's visit to the town during the NCM had vanished by July 1923, reported Sarat Chandra Mahapatra, a Congress activist from Ganjam.[19]

However, having realized the significance of the *ashram*s, the UPCC proposed to begin a "provincial-level *ashram*" at *Satyavadi* from August 1923. With Niranjan Patnaik as coordinator, the *ashram* would train 10 cadres at a time (with a maximum of three cadres from a district), resolved the UPCC on 26 June 1923. Unfortunately, due to lack of funds, the *ashram* did not come into being and the date of its formal beginning was postponed over and over again.[20]

Among the Congress newspapers, the *Swarajya Samachar*, bought over by the Balasore DCC, stopped appearing after a few issues in early 1922. The *Seba*, the organ of the Sambalpur DCC,

[15] *UD*, 6 September 1924.
[16] Archana Nayak, *Pundit Gopabandhu Das*, Bhubaneswar, 1995, p. 59.
[17] *Seba*, 4 November 1922.
[18] *UD*, 21 February 1925.
[19] *Asha*, 16 July 1923.
[20] *Asha*, 9 and 23 July 1923.

appeared intermittently from the beginning of 1923 only to close publication in end March 1923.[21] Its closure was directly attributed to the arrest of Nilakantha Das, the manager and editor of the paper. The *Samaj* had to shift from *Satyavadi* to Puri in December 1924 and finally to Cuttack in July 1927. Its survival was, however, ensured in Cuttack.[22]

The other section of the nationalist press, which did not directly run as the Congress mouthpiece, also suffered a decline. The *Sadhana* and *US*, both from Sambalpur, shut down by November 1923.[23] However, the *UD* and the *Asha* survived without compromising on their nationalist ideology and publication quality.

Though there was a relative fall in radical nationalist actions, the support base of the nationalists had probably been intact. This got reflected in the form of increasing readership of some nationalist papers. Hence, the closure of some Congress organs was compensated by fresh efforts at establishing new journals and newspapers. The *Puribasi* was published by Somanath Sadhangi and the *Sahayog Samachar* and *Sakti* also came up during this period.[24] The *Prajatantra* by Harekrishna Mahatab and *East Coast* by Godavarish Mishra, two prominent Congressmen, began publication in 1923. Nilakantha Das kept making efforts to begin the *Masika Patra*, which finally saw the light of the day as *Navajivan* in 1933. Further, Laxmi Narayan Mishra (Sambalpur) and Sribatsa Panda, known for their sincere work in the Congress, took the initiative and brought out a weekly (*Biryaban)* and a monthly (*Samskar*), respectively.[25]

Denial of adequate space for voicing their view points in the *Samaj*, which had emerged as the main organ of the Congress and the nationalists in the state, appears to be one of the chief reasons

[21] *Samaj*, 7 April 1923.
[22] The shifting was more due to squabbling within the *Satyavadi gosthi* than anything else. This aspect would be discussed later. For details see, Archana Nayak, *Pundit Gopabandhu*, p. 101.
[23] *UD*, 23 November 1923.
[24] *UD*, 20 January and 17 February 1923.
[25] *Asha*, 10 August and 21 June 1926.

behind many of these nationalist efforts.[26] But this also explains how the press was considered a powerful instrument which could be used for individual and sometimes even for narrow factional interests at a time when squabbling had become quite apparent in the Congress.[27] The longevity and regularity of a particular publication now largely depended on the personal management capability of the publisher.[28] This was also true of the "loyalist" press run by the princes and zamindars. As a result, the *Sambalpur Hiteishini* brought out by the Bamanda prince and the *Hitavarta* run by Khan Bahadur Abdul Majid, a zamindar who was a member of the B&O Legislative Council and was very close to the authorities, could not prosper (in fact, they were closed down) despite their economic affluence.[29] In other words, by drawing support mainly from its readers, the vernacular press was gradually becoming independent. Hence, it could afford to criticize the authorities and maintain its nationalist nature even when radical nationalist actions were at a low ebb in the aftermath of the NCM in the state.

Besides, the period witnessed many proclaimed non-cooperators moving back to government institutions they had left earlier during the height of the NCM. In Balasore, except for a few students like Nilambar Das and Biswanath Hota, most others went back to the government school.[30] In *Satyavadi*, the demand for government affiliation of the school came mainly from the students in 1923 and 1924 as it was considered essential for the official recognition of school degrees.[31] Succumbing to the pressure, Godavarish started a "national school" at Banapur, his native village, in January 1923,

[26] *Asha*, 10 September and 8 October 1923.

[27] The issue of squabbling is discussed later.

[28] The *Utkal Dipika* concluded while discussing the "health" [read poor economic condition] of *Sadhana* of Sambalpur, the *UD*, 24 November 1923. The *Samaj*, after the arrest of Gopabandhu Das in March 1922, was edited by Acharya Harihar Das who could successfully make it the mouthpiece of the nationalists during the period. File No. 52 of 1923, 18 March 1923, *Poll. Special*, B&O Government.

[29] The *SH* had stopped after 35 years of regular publication. The *UD*, 17 March 1923.

[30] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 39.

[31] *Samaj*, 5 September 1925.

which allowed students to take examinations at government schools.[32] In 1925, Nabakrishna Choudhury, a non-cooperation leader, chose the middle course between a government school and full-time nationalist activities and joined Shantiniketan, run by Rabindranath Tagore, for further studies.[33] Such compromises evoked no criticism from the nationalist circle, probably because of extreme passivity at the ground level.

Nearly all lawyers, barring Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra, resumed their practice during this phase. Prominent among them were Jagabandhu Singh and Banamali Das from Puri, Mukunda Prasad Das from Balasore, Dharmananda Patnaik from Cuttack and Natabar Gartia and Ram Narayan Mishra from Sambalpur.[34] Bhagirathi Mishra, who had left law college in Calcutta to launch the NCM in Sambalpur in early 1921, reportedly rejoined the college in August 1923.[35]

Though many of these lawyers were also active in the Congress later on, their resumption of practice and the students' rejoining of schools disillusioned the ordinary Congress workers so much so that they pointedly asked, "If the Congress could neither do anything nor say anything in this regard, why is it unnecessarily opposed to the proposal of 'council entry'? There was no reason to break the party on such a trivial issue".[36]

However, the government officials who had resigned during the course of the movement and could not rejoin office unlike lawyers who could go back to their practice or students who went back to their schools, remained active in the party and formed the main base of the nationalist circle after 1922. From then on, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Surendranath Das, Birakishor Das, Sribatsa Panda, Jaymangal Rath, Niranajan Patnaik and Pranakrishna Padhiary, some ex-students such as Harekrishna Mahatab, Rajkrishna Bose,

[32] *UD*, 10 March 1923.
[33] S.N. Dwivedy, ed., *Nabakrishna Choudhury Sraddhanjali* (commemorative volume on Nabakrishna Choudhury), Rourkela, 1984, Preface.
[34] *Asha*, 25 February 1924.
[35] *Asha*, 20 August 1923.
[36] *Asha*, 18 June 1923.

Bansidhar Mishra, Banchhanidhi Mohanty, Jadumani Mangaraj and Laxmi Narayan Mishra, and some *Satyavadi* teachers like Nilakantha Das, Acharya Harihar Das and Godavarish Mishra, provided leadership to the party.

I.a

As soon as the tempo of the NCM slowed down, regionalism became quite apparent in Orissa. This happened between 1923 and 1926. The "failure" of the Congress movement greatly helped the feeling to grow. As hopes from the Congress were belied, some nationalists saw a reversal to regional politics and pre-NCM "liberal" strategies as the right alternative. The issue of regionalism looked greater than its actual size, probably because other radial actions were conspicuous by their absence at the time.

Regionalism at this stage was mainly of two kinds: while one section questioned the alleged domination of one region over the other within the state, the other section championed the cause of provincialism, and opposed and competed with the middle classes of neighbouring states. Both resorted to narrow parochialism and tried to underplay the significance of the anti-colonial and national movement in the country.

I.a.i

Western Orissa, broadly known as Sambalpur, forms a separate cultural identity within Orissa. The people speak a dialect different from the Oriya spoken in other parts of Orissa. Locally known as *Sambalpuri*, the dialect (also claimed as a distinct language) is a queer mixture of Oriya, Hindi and Chhattisgarhi (the dialect spoken in adjoining Chhattisgarh). Even culturally, Sambalpur is believed to be distinct from the rest of Orissa.[37] During the period under discussion, the distinctness was more apparent due to the lack of proper transport and communication links with coastal and main Orissa. This led to the rise of a feeling of separateness among the

[37] *Sadhana*, 1 December 1927.

local intelligentsia and the DCC there in particular, which complained of "coastal" hegemony (domination by Cuttack, Puri and Balasore) in every sphere including the Provincial Congress.[38] Consequently, the DCC severed its relations with the UPCC in August 1924.[39]

It all began in June 1922, when Mahavir Singh, a non-Oriya Congress worker settled at Jharsuguda in the Sambalpur district was given the responsibility of coordinating *khadi* work in the Sambalpur district. As funds came rather liberally for the promotion of *khadi* from the All India Khadi Board (AIKB), Singh, in whose name the funds came for the district, became the target of envy in the local Congress circle. It was also construed as a deliberate attempt to neglect the local activists by the UPCC leadership. The feeling of neglect rose further when Singh was nominated to the post of UPCC president in a meeting at Cuttack on 23 July 1922.[40] The local DCC members brought charges of "embezzlement of Congress money" against Mahavir Singh and complained of domination by the "coastal people controlled UPCC" over the local workers.[41] The *US* from Sambalpur criticized the UPCC of having a handful of "*hambada*" (self-styled) leaders who suffered from "poor vision" with "little mass support". It proposed that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) need not give "funds" to the Provincial Congress.[42] If the neglect did not stop, the *Seba* warned, the DCC would be compelled to severe its relations with the UPCC

[38] A movement with demands ranging from separate linguistic status to a separate state has emerged in western Orissa in recent times. When the *Krantidhana*, a monthly journal published from Bhubaneswar, criticized it in its editorial, the issue took a violent turn in western Orissa, particularly in places like Sambalpur, Bolangir and Burla. *Akshapada*, Cuttack, January 1994, p. 52. Such instances of regional tension are not uncommon in Orissa in recent times.

[39] Fortnightly Report of Bihar and Orissa (henceforth FRBO), File No. 25 of 1924, August, Home Dept. Political section (henceforth *Home Poll; Sadhana*, 1 January 1925).

[40] In 1922, the All India Khadi Board (henceforth AIKB) donated Rs 60,000 to Orissa for the work. The money was distributed among the district khadi boards. *UD*, 14 April 1923; *Seba* 10 June 1922; *Searchlight*, 30 July 1922.

[41] *Seba*, 5 August and 26 August 1922.

[42] Quoted in the *UD*, 17 February 1923.

and get affiliated to the Provincial Congress Committee (PCC) of the Central Provinces very soon.[43]

Following this alarming news, the UPCC appointed Godavarish Mishra to audit the *khadi* board accounts on 19 February 1923. The auditor reached after 17 months (in July 1924) but could find neither accounts nor funds. This strengthened the basis of complaints made by the Congressmen with regard to the misappropriation of funds in Sambalpur.[44]

What probably infuriated the Sambalpur Congress workers more was the fact that the press and the leaders in the UPCC actually counter-attacked them for lodging such "baseless" complaints. Reacting to the *US*'s observations, the UD concluded that it pointedly disagreed with them. Further, it severely criticized the "young" (read "childish") proprietor of the *Seba* for using "immoderate language" for other Congressmen without any basis.[45] When Bhagirathi Mishra, the young proprietor, resumed his law studies, the *Asha* chided him for his "adventures" in Congress politics during the NCM phase.[46] On the other hand, the UPCC and the *Utkal Khadi Board* continued to maintain relations with Mahavir Singh. All this forced the DCC to severe its links with the UPCC in August 1924.[47]

The infuriated DCC members sent their monthly quota of the yarn they spun to the AIKB and not to the *Utkal Khadi Board*.[48] On 19 August 1925, when Mahatma Gandhi visited Cuttack they brought the matter to his notice. Citing some instances of ill-treatment, they expressed their desire to remain with the PCC of the Central Provinces rather than with the UPCC. In response, the *Asha* again criticized the Sambalpur leaders for overplaying the issue of "ill-treatment" and disapproved of their decision to join the PCC of the Central Provinces.[49] Soon after Gandhi's departure,

[43] *Seba*, 10 June 1922.
[44] FRBO, 25 of 1924, July, *Home Poll.*
[45] *UD*, 17 February and 7 April 1922.
[46] *Asha*, 20 August 1923.
[47] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, August, *Home Poll.*
[48] *Sadhana*, 1 January 1925.
[49] *Asha*, 14 September 1925.

the UPCC also proposed to seriously look into the matter in its executive committee meeting to be held at Cuttack on 2 September 1925.[50] On 29 September 1925, Gandhi asked Gopabandhu Das to look into the matter.[51] However, the DCC's relations with the UPCC remained adversely affected throughout the period, only to be resumed in late 1927 when the DCC sent representatives to the Simon boycott meeting and volunteers to the flood relief camps organized by the UPCC in coastal Orissa.[52] Due to the absence of any formal relations, the UPCC's list of candidates for the council elections of November 1926 included none from Sambalpur.[53]

I.a.ii

The other variety of regionalism appeared in the form of narrow provincialism in different parts of Orissa during the period. In Ganjam, the feeling led to serious differences between the Oriya and Telugu Congress workers. The origin of such bitter feelings dated back to the Oriya linguistic and cultural movement in the late nineteenth century. In 1920, on the eve of the NCM, when the Andhra PCC invited the Congress to hold its session (of 1925) at Berhampur, an outlying Oriya tract, the Orissa nationalists strongly resented the move. They felt this would weaken the demand for Ganjam's amalgamation with Orissa.[54] A section of nationalists, however, advised the local Orissa leaders to whole-heartedly work for the proposed Congress and to marginalize the Andhra PCC and the Telugus there.[55] Ultimately, the session was not held and this saved both the Orissa and Andhra leaders from the much unwanted competition.

During his tour of Andhra and Orissa in late March 1921, Mahatma Gandhi tasted the bitterness of provincial feeling and commented at Berhampur that "as between provincial and national

[50] *Asha*, 31 August 1925.
[51] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (henceforth *CWMG*), Vol. XXVIII, p. 251.
[52] *Sadhana*, 3 November 1927.
[53] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[54] *Prajamitra*, 25 June 1920.
[55] *Utkal Sevak*, 1 July 1920.

advancement the former should not grow at the cost of the latter".[56] During the peak of non-cooperation in January 1922, the Orissa and Andhra Congress workers picketed liquor and foreign cloth shops in two separate groups. This intensified the nationalist wave in the short run, but it also showed the intense linguistic rivalry between them.[57]

In the aftermath of the NCM, the rivalry increased manifold. Though the Oriya-speaking population outnumbered the Telugus in Ganjam, the former was "looked down upon". "The incurring of humiliation at one's own home is a matter of great regret", wrote the *Asha* in 1923.[58] Throughout the period, a number of meetings were held and articles written in the press to highlight the issue of Ganjam's amalgamation with the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency. The Ganjam DCC in its conference at Belguntha (10–12 November 1923) demanded the amalgamation of Ganjam and expressed deep regret that the INC had not paid due attention to the issue.[59] Sensing the seriousness, the Kakinada Congress of 1923 appointed an arbitration committee under the chairmanship of C. Rajagopalachari, with two representatives from Utkal and two from Andhra to investigate the question of Andhra–Utkal delimitation and to arrive at a decision before 31 March 1924, "the decision of the committee being final".[60] The press in Orissa welcomed the Congress decision and the PCC elected Nilakantha Das and Niranjan Patnaik to the committee for the purpose. The Andhra PCC had nominated Pattabhi Sitarammaya and Venkat Satyanarayan to the committee.[61]

The issue became hot once again when responding to a question by Bhubanananda Das in the Central Legislative Assembly regarding the amalgamation of Ganjam, the government reportedly ignored the existence of a movement for Orissa union and desired

[56] *Hindu*, 1 April 1921, in *CWMG*, Vol. XIX, p. 485.
[57] *Samaj*, 8 April 1922.
[58] *Asha*, 31 December 1923.
[59] *Searchlight*, 16 December 1923; *UD*, 24 November 1923.
[60] *Asha*, 7 January 1924.
[61] *Asha*, 4 February 1924.

to depute two officers to ascertain the wishes of the local people there (Ganjam). In a sharp reaction to this a meeting was held at Berhampur on 12 February 1924 which "viewed the government's idea with concern".[62] In March 1924, the *Asha* brought out an "amalgamation special" with numerous poems and essays on the Ganjam issue,[63] to emphasize the point that the Orissa Movement was far stronger than it was imagined to be.

The ill-feeling between the Oriya and Telugu-speaking population in the Ganjam amalgamation movement continued to rise. It culminated in a number of "noisy scenes" both by Andhra and Orissa Congressmen at the time of Gandhi's visit in December 1927. At Chikakole, a Telugu-dominated area bordering Ganjam, the national anthem was sung in Gandhi's presence with the word "Andhra" replacing "Utkal".[64] Prior to Gandhi's visit at Chhatrapur (Orissa), there had been demands for the early transfer of Ganjam to the Orissa division under the banner of "Oriya Samaj".[65] On 6 December 1927, Gandhi, in his speech at Chhatrapur asked "for the ending of such unhealthy competition between sister languages" and prognosticated that such narrow provincialism would retard "the motion of nationalism in the country".[66]

I.a.iii

Singhbhum, another outlying tract, also saw tension between the Orissa and Bihar Congress workers. In 1918, when a school was started at Chakradharpur with Godavarish Mishra as its headmaster, people irrespective of their linguistic affiliations extended help for they thought that it was meant for promoting the overall education in the locality. However, following the formation of the UPCC and the launch of the NCM the scene changed. The Singhbhum DCC was formed with Godavarish Mishra as its head in January 1921. Now the school was converted to a centre for national education,

[62] *Asha*, 18 February 1924.
[63] *Asha*, 15 March 1924.
[64] *CWMG*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 364.
[65] *Searchlight*, 24 January 1926.
[66] *CWMG*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 364.

and Godavarish as the headmaster and DCC president led the campaign both in Chakradharpur and in the adjoining countryside. The episode was viewed as an activity which centred round the local Oriya-speaking population. This development greatly alienated the Hindi-speaking people from the school and the movement.[67] They probably suspected that it was a kind of Oriyan effort to monopolize local nationalist politics, because Mishra's compatriots were mainly Oriya speakers. The misgivings continued to rise even during the height of the NCM and did not subside even though Gopabandhu Das and Rajendra Prasad undertook a joint campaign in the district.

In fact, the DCC, which consisted only of Oriya speakers, did not make adequate efforts to incorporate the Hindi-speaking Congress workers. As a result, it continued to remain a forum for agitation on the issue of Singhbhum's union with the Orissa division (of Bengal) or main Orissa. In other words, the linguistic tension between the two sections of the party continued throughout.

Initially, the Bihar PCC could not concentrate on Singhbhum, probably because of lack of local resources including workers. However, during the "aftermath", local Hindi-speaking workers came forward, partly due to the linguistic twist in the politics there. In late 1924, a separate DCC under Bihar PCC was formed at Chainbasa.[68] The Oriya Congressmen, at their annual DCC session on 16 November 1924, presided over by Anant Mishra, described the development as a "major settack" to the Congress movement and consequently reported the matter to the AICC to give its ruling.[69]

The *UD* at the time had been fighting the "injustice" being done to the "*Odiya jati*" (Oriya nation) due to the domination of "Biharis" in the B&O administration. It strongly objected to the recruitment of "Biharis" in the settlement operations in Balasore, because the Oriyas were far more "sincere and hardworking" than the Biharis

[67] Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, Vol. IV, pp. 120–21. As Mishra described, the school was closed a little before the summer vacation in order to undertake the campaign in the countryside.
[68] *Searchlight*, 26 November 1924.
[69] *Ibid.*

who were allegedly "ignorant of settlement rules of Orissa". Further, it listed out some government departments where the "Biharis" were over-represented and the Oriyas "under-represented" in terms of employment. "This showed how a *jati* is perpetually ignored by the government", the paper concluded in August 1923.[70]

Anant Mishra, popularly known as *pracharak* (campaigner) was probably the first full-time activist of the nationalist movement in Orissa. He had shifted to Singhbhum from *Satyavadi* for strengthening the nationalist campaign as well as the Orissa Movement there following the suspension of the NCM. But the local apathy to Congress work made him feel he should concentrate on setting up a school at Dhalbhum, "without having any formal links with the Congress" in March 1925.[71] On 28 June 1925, one "Oriya Education Campaign Committee" was formed. The Committee declared that it would have no truck with the Congress and would work for the promotion of the Oriya linguistic movement. Such declarations were probably meant to allay the fears of local supporters who did not like to openly get identified with the Congress movement during the non-active phase. Besides Anant Mishra, who headed the DCC, Krishna Chandra Acharya, Purnachandra Tripathy and Suresh Sadhangi were all former local Congress leaders who formed the core of the Committee.[72] Consequently, the Utkal PCC was now bereft of the Singhbhum DCC, a matter which came up for discussion at the time of Gandhi's visit in August 1925. Though Gandhi justified the Orissa leaders' efforts at "safeguarding their language"[73] in the outlying tracts, the Singhbhum workers were not assuaged and the district, like Sambalpur, remained unattended even at the time of finalizing the list of Congress candidates for the council elections of November 1926.[74]

[70] *UD*, 3 and 11 August 1923.
[71] *Asha*, 30 March 1925.
[72] *Sadhana*, 9 July 1925; *Asha*, 6 July 1925.
[73] *Asha*, 14 September 1925.
[74] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.

I.a.iv

Soon after the NCM, Oriya regionalism with its main aim of a distinct linguistic and cultural identity through a separate linguistic province grew at an alarming scale within the nationalist circle. Before the UPCC could overcome the sense of "setback", the UUC was revived and its annual session was held after a lapse of two years at Berhampur on 31 March and 1 April 1923. A liberal lawyer from Cuttack, Kalpataru Das, presided over the session, and attempts were made to remain aloof from "politics". The decline in the UCC was attributed to its affiliation with "politics" and to the Congress.[75]

The organization of the UUC session had taken an interesting turn for it was under Congress "control", but lacked effective coordination since the non-cooperation days. The nationalists had been sharply polarized into two main camps, cooperators (Pro-changers) and non-cooperators (No-changers)—*sahayogi* and *asahayogi* in Oriya. The cooperators included the liberals and loyalists. The No-changer Congressmen were described as "non-cooperators" for their continued belief in the path of non-cooperation with the government. Sashi Bhusan Rath, the editor of *Asha* and a member of the Legislative Council of Madras representing Berhampur, who headed the Reception Committee of the forthcoming UUC, appealed to the non-cooperators to attend the session, for there was no contradiction between the Congress and the UUC.[76] At the same time, he tried to assuge the cooperators' fears about the alleged domination of the non-cooperators over the conference.[77] "I am a cooperator myself as well as the chairman of the Reception Committee", he clarified. Despite this, many liberal and loyalist leaders such as Madhusudan Das, Ram Narayan Mishra, Bhagabat Samant and the Madhupur zamindar, when approached, declined to preside over the session for fear of its Congress links.[78]

[75] *Samaj*, 2 April 1923; *UD*, 24 March 1923.
[76] *Asha*, 19 February 1923.
[77] *Asha*, 19 March 1923.
[78] *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the *UD* and the *Samaj* objected to even Kalpataru Das' nomination as president because of his liberal image.[79] The *Asha*, whose editor was Sashi Bhusan Rath himself, strongly advocated for "cooperation" with the government, as it was a pragmatic approach. "In an adverse situation like this it is almost impossible to counter the [enemy] forces without having any formal linkages with them", the paper concluded.[80]

The indomitable "non-cooperators", however, refused to oblige and continued to strike at the growing liberal attitude of the "cooperators". In his speech at the UUC session, Gopabandhu Choudhury, a staunch non-cooperator, justified the UUC's merger with the Congress, but was out-voted by the cooperators which included many Congressmen as well. A pitched battle waged in the Subject Committee, to which many non-cooperators had been elected, over a resolution with regard to the manner in which the Oriya Movement was to be led. The cooperators insisted on the insertion of the words "constitutionally and in a legitimate way", while the non-cooperators accepted the term "legitimate", but outrightly rejected "constitutional". When an absolute deadlock was threatened, the latter were compelled to resign from the Subject Committee[81] and Gopabandhu Choudhury on their behalf "agreed" to accept the cooperators' resolution in toto, because "civil disobedience as declared by Tilak" was considered "constitutional".[82] Following his failure, in March 1924, Gopabandhu resigned from the UUC, a broader nationalist umbrella than the Congress in the Orissa context.[83] For the first time, these staunch Congressmen had started deserting the UUC because of the growing liberal and loyalist influence there.

Overcoming the initial setback, the UPCC was better organized in 1924 than in 1923. The growing strength of the non-cooperators was reflected through the statement of Niranjan Patnaik, who

[79] Quoted in *Asha*, 26 March 1923.
[80] *Asha*, 26 February 1923.
[81] *Asha*, 9 April 1923.
[82] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1923, April, *Home Poll.*
[83] *UD*, 22 March 1924; Mohanti, *Dhuli Matir Santha*, p. 76.

outlined the broad contours of their differences with other Congressmen and lent support to Gopabandhu Choudhury's arguments on the UUC's merger with the Congress. He also advocated for a confrontationist attitude towards the government to get the Orissa issue resolved.[84] On the other hand, the UUC, now known as the *Pradeshik Sammilani* or Provincial Conference (not Congress!), had almost come under the grip of the non-cooperators like Gopabandhu Choudhury.[85] The non-cooperators' strength was evident from the fact that the *Sammilani* was hosted at Cuttack on 28 and 29 June 1924, which coincided with the release of Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra, imprisoned for their involvement in the NCM since March 1922. Presided over by the well-known nationalist scientist from Bengal, Prafulla Chandra Ray, the conference accorded a hero's welcome to the two leaders on their release from jail. It was here that the epithet, *Utkalmani*, (jewel of Utkal) was added to Gopabandhu's name, a rare honour for the leader's service to the state. Since Gopabandhu was the main leader of the non-cooperators, it also established the latter's predominance over Orissa politics.[86] Madhusudan Das, the veteran liberal leader, also got enrolled as a primary member.[87] In other words, the Provincial Conference, developed on the lines of the UUC of the pre-NCM period, tried to bring all nationalists under one platform and the non-cooperators held its reins.

Keeping the regional specificities in mind, Jaymangal Rath, a hardcore non-cooperator from Berhampur, had given a few proposals for broadening the nationalist base in Orissa in March 1923. The proposals showed the non-cooperators' understanding of the twin issues of Congress campaign and Orissa issues. It was proposed that the UUC should be made a regular movement with branches in every village and activities should continue throughout the year. Second, its twin objectives should be *swaraj* and the union

[84] *UD*, 10 May 1924.
[85] It was Gopabandhu Choudhury who gave the appeal in the press for attending the conference in 1924. *Asha*, 21 April 1924.
[86] Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 127.
[87] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, July, *Home Poll*.

of Oriya-speaking tracts. Further, there should be adequate coordination amongst the nationalist members elected to the local-boards like the district boards and municipalities so that they could effectively redress the grievances of the local people. Besides, Rath emphasized the unity between the non-cooperators and the cooperators so as to strengthen the base of the nationalist campaign in Orissa. For this, he thought, the constructive programme of the Congress should be taken up by all sections of the nationalists wholeheartedly, for it had been neither objected to by the Pro-changers, nor by the No-changers.[88] The formation of the Provincial Conference without the mention of the Congress could be seen in the context of a broader unity among the nationalists. The cooperators, broadly representing the regional and linguistics elements, were not in agreement with the non-cooperators on the Orissa issues. They demanded that the movement for amalgamation be kept outside the influence of the Congress. Nilakantha Das, who started as a *Satyavadi* man and led the NCM, had been elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in the elections of November 1923 against the wishes of his non-cooperator colleagues and was advocating the cooperators' line of political thought among the nationalists.[89] In fact, it was Nilakantha who could be seen as the main leader of the Pro-changers in Orissa.

The UUC, UPCC and Provincial Conference were three names borne by the nationalist movement and leadership in Orissa during different points of time. The name given to, or accepted by, the movement at a particular time needs to be seen in terms of the predominance of the political group in the region. Before the launch of the NCM, the UUC witnessed a predominance of the regional forces who were allergic to any integral relationship with the Congress for fear of dilution of their main focus. During the NCM, the name "UUC" was replaced by the "UPCC", which symbolized the victory of those nationalist forces who were for integration with the Congress. The scene changed once again when the NCM was suspended and the Congress was on a decline. The UUC took

[88] *Asha*, 12 March 1923.
[89] *UD*, 12 July 1924.

over the UPCC for all practical purposes. The staunch Congressmen were called non-cooperators and remained as a faction within the UUC. However, by mid-1924, the non-cooperators once again consolidated their position and struck a compromise with the cooperators. The new name, Provincial Conference, had no mention of the word Congress. The non-cooperators' position further improved when the term "Political Conference" was used to mean the Provincial Conference. In a sense, the insertion of the term "political" meant nothing but the growing strength and resurgence of the non-cooperators in the local nationalist politics.

The non-cooperators' efforts for unity among all nationalist forces (for which they were not adamant on the use of the term "Congress" in the name of the political movement) materialized when the Orissa Provincial Conference (also called Political Conference) held its second annual session at Bolgarh in the Puri district on 14 and 15 November 1925. Organized under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, it demanded a separate Orissa province, which was an advance move against the UUC's earlier demand for amalgamation of all Oriya-speaking tracts under one political administration. Second, the Conference was not shy of its association with the Congress ideals. It was meant to be a rare blending of both regional as well as national issues.

Gopabandhu Das, as the chairman of the Reception Committee of the Conference paid due attention to both issues. He said:

> Utkal is an integral part of India. Its progress and regress depends on the ups and downs of the country. Every province is distinct in her own ways. She has her special needs, which should be seriously looked into. Instead of being hostile, the provinces would be complimentary to India's progress. The development and progress of a province ultimately leads to the overall development in a country. The progress of an individual in no way affects a family, nor does the family's progress restrain a village from growing. Similarly, the development in a village must not retard the growth of a state. Neither the world nor the human being is inherently opposed to the concept of development. Each one [on earth] is integrated and inter-related with one another. The members complement one another. It is this kind of national feeling

> which is currently sweeping across the country since the launching of the Non-Cooperation Movement. The Indian nation has acknowledged the distinct provincial nature of Utkal. … A non-violent peaceful mass movement like Non-Cooperation would never pull back a state or a nation. If Utkal had not joined it, it would have been impossible on her part to face the world today. She would have missed her position in the contemporary Indian nation.[90]

At the same time, Gopabandhu very strongly justified the Oriya Movement. He said, "In fact the union of Orissa is not merely a political issue, it is also a social and national issue for the Oriya people".[91]

Such attempts to contain regionalism, however, could not be fully successful. The *Asha* took a dig at the organizers of the Bolgarh Conference probably for its open identification with the Congress and concluded that the audience had to quit the hall, since Gopabandhu's speech was so boring.[92] Further, commenting on the "imminent death" of the *Satyavadi* School, it said, the decline was mainly due to the school's participation in the NCM.[93]

In the following years more and more Congressmen were indoctrinated into the parochial feeling of regionalism. On the eve of the Council and Central Assembly elections of November 1926, Bhubanananda Das a Swarajist member of the Central Legislative Assembly (1923–26) and then a member of Independent Congress Party, and Madhusudan Das, who had been newly enrolled as a Congress member, refused to accept the Congress programme for it had "failed" to give due priority to the Orissa issue.[94] When both were denied a Congress ticket in the elections for their "anti-party" activities, the *Asha* severely criticized the UPCC. The paper justified both for raising objections to the Congress programme and hailed them for their principled stand on the Orissa issue.[95]

[90] *Samaj*, 24 November 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 356–57.
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Searchlight*, June 1926.
[95] *Asha*, 26 February and 14 June 1926.

A sympathizer of the Congress, sensing the prevailing mood, suggested to the UPCC to project the “separate Orissa” issue as the main problem in the election agenda and “to take a line independent of the Indian National Congress”, lest the opponents got a clean sweep in the ensuing elections.[96] Even Gopabandhu Das, a father figure of the Congress movement in the state, could not stay away from regionalism for very long and wished to form an “Orissa Party” for highlighting the local issues, and personally desired “a compact body of councillors” to win in the elections “irrespective of any party consideration”. Though the proposed Orissa Party was not formed, Bhubanananda won the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly (1926), despite opposition from the Congress circle.[97]

Towards the close of the 1920s, the nationalist tide was once again on the rise everywhere. The regional identity got reconciled with the broad nationalist identity in Orissa. In early December 1928, an all party meeting was convened at Cuttack and a committee consisting of Congress members such as Nilakantha Das, Lingaraj Mishra, Harekrishna Mahatab, Nanda Kishor Das, Jadumani Mangaraj, Gopabandhu Choudhury and Niranjan Patnaik was constituted to prepare a draft for the proposed linguistic province.[98] At the same time, the Calcutta Congress of 1928 witnessed around 300 delegates from Orissa, a contingent larger than what the UPCC had even sent to the annual Congress sessions. Soon after the Congress session, the UPCC organized a mass meeting of the migrant Oriya labourers in Calcutta and enlisted their support for the forthcoming CDM.[99] These steps established the Congressmen, on the one hand, as the champions of the linguistic cause and provincial advancement and, on the other hand, portrayed them as the leaders of the anti-colonial struggle in the state.

[96] *Searchlight*, 1 June 1926.
[97] *UD*, 13 November 1926.
[98] *UD*, 8 December 1929.
[99] *UD*, 12 January 1929; *Report on the Indian National Congress*, 1928, p. 6.

I.b

The disintegration of the UPCC into several factions was another distinct characteristic of Orissa politics in the aftermath of the NCM. Instead of working as a cohesive body, the Congress functioned through different factions, which resulted in its ambivalance on many important public issues. An analysis of this aspect would probably be useful to comprehend the basis of growing factionalism in the Congress Party as well as in other political parties of the contemporary period.

The formation of the Congress unit, which continued to exist as a "committee" (UPCC) rather than as a "party" at least till 1925,[100] had been preceded by the emergence of a number of independent groups based on nationalist lines. The *Satyavadi* and the *Bharati Mandir* were two such prominent groups (*gosthi*) of young political activists. The *Satyavadi*'s origin as a group could be traced to the inception of the *Satyavadi* School in 1909, the *Satyavadi* monthly magazine in 1913 and, above all, to the growth of moderate nationalism as an alternative nationalist trend to the politics of the liberals in the UUC since 1905–06. In terms of the average age of the members, it was older than the *Bharati Mandir*, a representative group of younger nationalists, which had been formed on the eve of non-cooperation at Cuttack.[101]

Besides the age gap between the members, the regional and caste considerations of the members also fostered divisions between the two groups of nationalists. The *Satyavadi* group was based in Puri district, while the *Bharati Mandir* group originated at Cuttack and comprised nationalists mainly from Cuttack and Balasore districts. Moreover, over a period of time, while the former continued to exist as a nucleus group, the latter was diluted to a broad nationalist formation with the backing of younger groups whose interest in radical and mass actions was quite apparent.

[100] A resolution was passed at Bolgarh to grow the UPCC into a party. Godavarish Mishra had been given the responsibility to plan out the strategy for that. *Asha*, 30 November 1925.
[101] Rama Devi, *Mo Jibana Pathe (Autobiography) 1984*, p. 46; Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 23.

Other than the nationalistic bond, the *Satyavadi* group was founded by a group of upper castes and their kins. Almost all its core members such as Gopabandhu Das, Anant Mishra, Kripasindhu Mishra, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra, Lingaraj Mishra and Acharya Harihar Das were Brahmins. As most of them belonged to the *sasani* Brahmin (traditionally considered "superior" among the Brahmins) villages, a strong caste and kinship relationship existed among them.[102] In 1904–05, their politics had begun with the formation of the *Puri Brahman Samiti,* an organization initiated to bring about social reforms among the Brahmins. The two Brahmins who had inspired them the most in this regard were Pandit Harihar Das (1842–74) and Muktyar Ramachandra Das from Puri. Though Harihar Das died much before the birth of Gopabandhu, he had a great impact on the making of Gopabandhu's personality.

Harihar showed a rare blending of traditional and western thought. He had been a scholar of Sanskrit, could do *sastrarth* with learned *pandit*s and made his living by giving lectures on traditional Indian knowledge. He was in touch with Dayanand Saraswati of Arya Samaj, but at the same time taught Oriya to the *saheb*s, learnt Latin, Greek and English, wore "*saheb* robes", mingled with the "*sahebs*" and distributed pen and paper among the *chatsali* students against the conservatives' threats to "outcaste" the users of such "alien" materials. With the help of a "*saheb*", Harihar planned to visit England by "crossing the sea", a mission that remained unfulfilled due to his unexpected death at the age of 32. Harihar's vision, however, centred round reforms amongst the Brahmins, the "high caste", who, after being liberated from *kusamskara*s, would "naturally disseminate the fruits of reforms in the rest of the society". As a result of such "trickle down effect", society would ultimately be free from all social evils, he felt. While listing out Harihar's contributions, Gopabandhu Das, later wrote, "You [Harihar] knew well, when the Brahmins would give up *kusamskar*s, all other castes would follow them soon and development would spread thereafter".[103]

[102] See, Das, *Atmajivani*, pp. 22–23. The narrative explains the close family relations between them.

[103] See, Das, *Yugantakari*, pp. 14–18.

Ramachandra Das, who carried forward Harihar's vision, established the *Brahman Samiti* at Puri. The *Samiti*, a sort of group for Brahmin students studying Sanskrit, aimed at imparting Oriental knowledge like the Vedas and Sanskrit blended with modern thought like nationalism, western literature, science and logic. As young students, Gopabandhu Das, Acharya Harihar, Nilakantha and Anant Mishra, had their primary lessons in politics, patriotism and literature under the stewardship of Ramachandra Das in the premises of the *Brahman Samiti* in Puri.[104]

The *Satyavadi* leaders' Brahmin-centric thoughts imparted at the Brahman Samiti, continued throughout the period. In *Satyavadi* they mobilized the Brahmins to "plough" the land and to "sport" moustaches themselves—traditions forbidden among the "high" castes—and, in turn, incurred the wrath of the conservatives.[105] They shared the vision of Pandit Harihar Das (that the reforms would percolate down) and their Brahmin identity often got reflected in their speeches and writings.[106] They did not necessarily contain any overt anti-non-Brahmin feelings, but were sufficient to foster division among the nationalist ranks in a caste divided society.

During the post-1922 period, the *Satyavadi gosthi* with a few notable exceptions like Gopabandhu Das and Anant Mishra, centred round the regionalists (discussed earlier), the Pro-changers and the Swarajists. Thus, the *Satyavadi* leaders such as Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra and Jagabandhu Singh contested the council elections in November 1923, while Lingaraj Mishra, Kripasindhu Mishra and a few others were fully identified with the Swarajist camp.[107] The "cooperators" drew strength mainly from them. On the other hand, the *Bharati Mandir* group with its leaders like Gopabandhu Choudhury, Harekrishna Mahatab, Jadumani Mangaraj, Rajkrishna Bose and Bhagirathi Mahapatra formed the No-changers.[108] This was, however, a broad political formation in

[104] See, Das, *Yugantakari*, pp. 14–18; Das, *Atmajivani*, pp. 56–59.
[105] Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 85; *Samaj*, 30 June 1924, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VII, p. 165.
[106] *Searchlight*, 21 December 1923; Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 92.
[107] Formally the Swaraj Party did not have a branch in Orissa. But Nilakantha was one of its national secretaries. *Asha*, 12 November 1923; *Searchlight*, 21 December 1923.
[108] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 92.

the state. There were leaders like Sashi Bhusan Rath, Ram Narayan Mishra and Biswanath Das, who did not belong to the *Satyavadi* group, but were 'cooperators' themselves, for they agreed with the council entry programme and had won elections in 1923. Similarly, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Jaymangal Rath and Sribatsa Panda, did not form a part of the *Bharati Mandir* group, but were staunch "No-changers" or "non-cooperators" during the period. In other word, the Swarajists and non-Swarajists were much broader political formulations than either the *Satyavadi* or the *Bharati Mandir* groups. The two only formed the core groups of the respective nationalist trends.

Apart from their divergent political viewpoints (to be discussed in a different section later), the two trends opposed each other on many general issues, which could be best explained by factionalism. It was so bitter that, Gopabandhu Das, because of his association with the No-changers (*Bharati Mandir* in the Orissa context), had to shift the *Satyavadi* printing press (along with the *Samaj* establishment) from *Satyavadi* to Puri in January 1925 and then to Cuttack in July 1927. Due to opposition from his former colleagues, he also severed relations with the *Satyavadi* School whose decline was attributed to him as well as to the NCM.[109] It was feared that the school would be denied any government grant for which it had applied unless the non-cooperators like Gopabandhu moved away from it. The *Asha*, as an advocate of the cooperators (and the *Satyavadi* group) suggested to the school committee that it assign the school responsibilities to a retired teacher of any government school so as to allay the suspicion of the British government.[110]

Though unity within the Congress was the stated objective of all the factions, the *Satyavadi* group did not cooperate with Gopabandhu, because of which the annual session of the Provincial Congress of 1925 (called Provincial Conference), which emphasized on unity, was shifted from Puri to Bolgarh near Khurda.[111] The Bolgarh Conference witnessed the election of Godavarish Mishra

[109] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Asha*, 10 August 1925.

to the post of UPCC president. Mishra hailed from the Khurda region with a large following among the delegates in the conference. Besides, he had been made the president so that the UPCC could grow as a "mass party". It was proposed that the "committee" be converted into a "party". But, the "Cuttack group could not tolerate it" and replaced Mishra with Harekrishna Mahatab in an UPCC meeting at Cuttack towards the close of 1925.[112]

Factional politics reached its height during Gandhi's visit in December 1927. By then the issue of Pro-changers and No-changers had became obsolete. Godavarish Mishra and a few other former Pro-changers invited Gandhi to *Satyavadi* and Banapur, two *Satyavadi* strongholds in Puri district, and accorded a rousing reception to him on 8 December 1927.[113] But the former No-changers like Govind Mishra, who were the local organizers of Gandhi's tour programme in Orissa, allegedly marginalized the *Satyavadi* group leaders such as Nilakantha Das and Jagabandhu Singh even in Puri, the *Satyavadi* stronghold. The result was a poorly attended public meeting at Puri on 14 December 1927 as compared to Gandhi's previous meeting at the same venue in 1921.[114]

Mahadev Desai, who was accompanying Gandhi, observed that as per expectation, relief funds could not be collected nor could the items presented to Gandhi on the occasions be auctioned at the end of the Puri meeting. Desai attributed this to poverty among the people, but lack of proper coordination among the organizers was also an important cause. This, however, did not escape Gandhi's attention. He remarked that Orissa needed not only money, but also more manpower for expanding its nationalist base.[115]

After the Puri meeting, Nilakantha Das joined Gandhi in the *padyatra* upto Cuttack. The experience was bitter, Nilakantha Das recalled later, for the tour programme designed by the "organizers" (read the *Bharati Mandir* group) was "horrible". Besides,

[112] *Asha*, 18 January 1926.
[113] Gandhi in the *Hindu*, 12 December 1927, quoted in *CWMG*, Vol. XXX, p. 396.
[114] Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 126.
[115] Mahadev Desai in the *Young India*, 22 December 1927, reproduced in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, Appendix, pp. 433–40.

Gopabandhu Choudhury and his associates regularly "chided" him on the way, for he was still considered an outsider.[116]

Prior to this, though the Pro-changers and the No-changers had been united, factionalism became quite conspicuous in the council elections of November 1926. The former No-changers were now not against council entry and the UPCC was under their control. Hence, party tickets were denied to some of the hardcore *Satyavadi* leaders and the "co-operators" such as Nilakantha, Jagabandhu Singh, Madhusudan Das and Bhubanananda Das, who had by then joined the Independent Congress Party.[117] This led to Godavarish Mishra's vitriolic attack on the functioning of the UPCC in his newly-founded journal, the *East Coast* (Ganjam), which finally fetched a ticket for Nilakantha alone.[118] The *Asha* of Sashi Bhusan Rath, a former cooperator and a Congress candidate for Ganjam, went further and demanded party tickets for Madhusudan Das, Bhubanananda Das and Jagabandhu Singh as well.[119]

In the elections, Jagabandhu Singh, Bhubanananda Das and Mukunda Prasad Das contested as independent candidates and lost to their Congress rivals miserably.[120] Madhusudan Das did not contest himself, but in his "effort" to build up a regional party independent of the Congress, he put up rival candidates in almost all constituencies. Gopal Chandra Praharaj, another liberal leader, who had become a Congress member like Madhusudan in 1924, openly campaigned against the Congress candidate in Puri.[121]

All this can probably be explained in terms of the growing factionalism in Congress politics. In the absence of radical actions like demonstrations, picketing, bonfires and boycott, elections had become the main occupying force for the sustenance of the

[116] Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 127.
[117] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[118] *Searchlight*, 1 June 1926.
[119] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[120] *Asha*, 13 December 1926.
[121] *Searchlight*, 3 November 1926; the UPCC in its meeting at Puri on 3 September 1923, instead of objecting to the council entry issue, decided to keep quiet. *Asha*, 10 September 1923.

nationalist movement and its leaders.[122] Elections had been so important to all nationalist trends that even in 1923, when the No-changers were keeping officially aloof from it, their tacit support or opposition was considered very pivotal for the victory of the candidates. This was probably the reason why the candidates, including the cooperators, were vying for "Congress [read non-cooperators, who were officially against the decision of council entry] approval". This was evident, when Nilakantha, a candidate, in his appeal to voters did not clarify that his candidature had been backed by the Swaraj Party and not by the INC. Rather, he declared that after his election, he would abide by the Congress' direction whether to continue in the Central Assembly (for which he was a candidate) or not.[123] He deliberately took such a vacillating position, probably, to garner the support of all Congressmen.

The reality was that the people perceived the Congress as a party opposed to the government, an institution hostile to the peoples' interests. As a result, any candidate approved by the Congress was acceptable, while all rival candidates were seen as "allies" of the "government party" and "overdue" for rejection. This was evident in the election results of 1923 as well as of 1926. They led to the victory of all Congress candidates and "defeat" of all rival candidates. More amazing was the margin of victory. In 1923, Godavarish Mishra (Khurda) got 1,442 votes against his rival's 255 votes.[124] In 1926, Lingaraj Mishra (South Puri) got 2,544 votes against his main rival who got 890 votes. Jagabandhu Singh, a former non-cooperation leader, contesting as an independent (in 1926), however, lost his deposit by garnering only 286 votes. The scene was no different for other rival candidates.[125]

Probably it was this image of the party, despite a "lull" in the mass activities, which compelled all factional leaders to accept the

[122] The *Asha* had appealed to the Kakinada Congress (1923) to realize that the party would be able to retain its momentum only because of the Swarajists' decision to take part in the elections. *Asha*, 24 December 1923.
[123] *Asha*, 12 November 1923.
[124] *Asha*, 3 December 1923.
[125] *Asha*, 13 December 1926.

official leadership of the Congress. Most of them could not afford to pose as rivals and alternatives to the official Congress (UPCC), despite their serious disagreements with the leadership.[126]

The Congress was held in high esteem despite the factionalism, at least during the period of our study. Hence, when Nilakantha was initially denied re-nomination during the elections of 1926, he did not rebel. His friends Godavarish Mishra and Sashi Bhusan Rath used their presses to criticize the UPCC decision. But Nilakantha almost bowed down to the leadership. It was at this point of time that he, as he was a fine writer himself, wrote why factionalism could not be tolerated in the Congress and in the process condemned all his mentors like Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai. It was a sort of apology letter emanating from a Congress leader who used to breed intense factional politics in Orissa. He wrote:

> There is no denying that, there are differences of opinion on the council issues within the Provincial Congress. However, the people would be happy to note that, the UPCC has rightly selected candidates for the council elections. Still, there may be some differences, but that must not divide the Congress. There can be attempts to direct the Congress opinion. But, if one goes out of the party and becomes the lord of one's own opinion, how could the Congress survive? What would happen to the nation? The Congress is a national property. It is the Congress' discipline which alone challenges the bondage of foreign rule. All divergent ideas could bloom within the Congress. No one would disagree with that. But if one quits the party and begins an independent party, that amounts to nothing but misuse, abuse and over-use of one's independence. This cannot be tolerated, even if it is Lalaji [Lala Lajpat Rai], Malaviya [M.M. Malaviya] or Kelkar [N.C. Kelkar] or anybody else. First, they must remain within the party and preach their ideas. Further, it [this idea] is not liable for any objection, if they [preachers of such ideas] could take along the majority of the Congress

[126] Nilakantha Das mentioned some of his disagreements with Gandhi which became apparent when they interacted during the latter's visit to Orissa in 1927. Das, *Atmajivani*, p. 127.

> with them. But if they go out and preach their ideas for exhibiting their greatness, can there be any discipline in national politics? That is why, the UPCC is right, when it stated that, despite divergences in opinions, everyone must always accept the official position of the Congress.[127]

Factionalism did not end after this, nor did Nilakantha remain aloof from factional politics hereafter. This only shows the deeper root of the problem. On the other hand, the statement also helps one to comprehend the nationalists' perception of the Congress Party during the period. It is proved beyond doubt that, due to the over-arching image of the party, the "main face of opposition to the foreign rule", all factions and divergent trends of opinions could survive within its confluence. This kept the national movement going under the Congress leadership, which appeared united in popular parlance despite having serious factional rivalries within.

I.c

Funding is an important aspect of any socio-political movement. A movement or for that matter social work stumbles due to lack of adequate funding or financial support. Hence, collection of funds often gets priority in the agenda of an organization. But does funding always augment the pace of work? What are its effects on the activists and workers particularly when funds flow from outside? Do they realize its worth? Does it not create rifts and squabbling within the party and the movement? What could be the alternative source to funding from outside for the sustenance of a political movement?

Some of these questions could well be answered from the developments in the post-NCM period in Orissa. On the one hand, a period of disillusionment set in the Congress rank and file, while on the other hand, because of social acceptability of the Party and its workers, there was regular inflow of funds into the Congress through different sources such as the AIKB, floods and famine relief committees and district and local boards. Practically speaking,

[127] *Asha*, 1 November 1926.

these funds came into the hands of the Congress leaders and workers, who were accountable for their spending in various schemes either as *khadi* board members or as responsible workers of relief committees, and so on. In the faction-ridden Congress, the use of these public funds created new problems. Funding from outside was considered easy money and everyone's due as well. It caused more harm than help to the party because allegations and counter-allegations of embezzlement of funds were brought against several leaders by the rival factions. Many times the allegations were proved right. Since the press was the main forum for raising all such allegations and the Congress workers enjoyed a public image of dedication and sacrifice, these allegations did stand in the way of constructive programmes, which had been the Congress' main agenda then.

In this regard, the complaints began from the Sambalpur DCC against Mahavir Singh, the working president of the UPCC in late 1922.[128] The amount of money mentioned in the complaint was Rs 2,000, which Singh had received from the *Utkal Khadi Board* for spreading *khadi* work in the district. When the complaint was not looked into, the *US* lambasted the UPCC for having a bunch of "*hambada*" (self-styled) leaders with no social base. It also appealed to the AICC to refrain from giving "thousands of rupees in grants" to the UPCC, for the regional leadership was corrupt.[129] The auditor appointed by the UPCC to look into the matter, after more than two years, could find neither the accounts nor the funds, which further substantiated the DCC's allegations.[130] On the other hand, the president of the *Utkal Khadi Board*, Niranjan Patnaik, apparently sided with Singh. Both of them even met Mahatma Gandhi and pleaded Singh's case at Patna in 1925.[131] It was alleged that even after the DCC's objections, Singh was regularly given funds by the

[128] *Seba*, 5 August 1922.
[129] Quoted in the *UD*, 17 February 1923.
[130] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, July, *Home Poll.*
[131] Gandhi wrote to Gopabandhu Das on 29 September 1925. See, *CWMG*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 251.

Khadi Board for *khadi* work in Sambalpur.[132] As a result, the DCC severed its formal relations with the UPCC till 1927.

Similar complaints also emanated from the Ganjam and Balasore DCCs in 1923. On 6 December 1923, the Balasore DCC in its meeting condemned Radhamohan Maharana for submitting fake accounts to the auditor.[133]

In July 1924, such allegations were made against Niranjan Patnaik, president of the *Utkal Khadi Board*. It was alleged that as president, Patnaik had removed some low paid full-time workers from the Khadi Board on grounds of financial austerity, while he had sanctioned Rs 7,000 to purchase a building for the Board in Ganjam. The austerity measures also did not affect the highly paid workers (they were paid Rs 30 to Rs 40 per month) of the Board, alleged the opponents. Besides, Patnaik's uninterrupted relations with the corrupt Mahavir Singh were criticized. The complainants also tried to link him with some major financial bunglings in the Khadi Board.[134]

In the same month, Niranjan Patnaik denied the charges in a statement in the *UD*.[135] But the feeling of guilt ultimately forced him to confess the truth on the eve of the CDM in early January 1930. In a letter to the press, he accepted that he had at times misappropriated the Khadi Board funds for his personal use. He attributed this to the growing poverty in his family. As penance, he resigned from the Board and promised to reorganize and rediscipline himself in future.[136] Thus, while the non-active phase of the movement corrupted a staunch Gandhian like Niranjan Patnaik, the active phase of 1930 inspired him to confess the guilt and boldly face the consequences.

Allegations of misuse of relief funds were brought against the UPCC president, Gopabandhu Das, once in December 1925 and a second time in December 1927. In 1925, the *Sakti*, a newspaper

[132] *UD*, 12 July 1924; *Puribasi*, 5 August 1924; *Sadhana*, 1 June 1925.
[133] *Asha*, 23 April and 24 December 1923.
[134] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[135] *UD*, 26 July 1924.
[136] *UD*, 18 January 1930.

from Puri, alleged that Gopabandhu spent a major chunk of relief funds for *khadi* work.[137] The shifting of relief funds to *khadi* work was not a case of personal corruption. But the complaint reflected the increasing strength of regionalism and the growing apathy towards national issues. According to the complaint, relief funds meant for Orissa should not have been spent for *khadi* work, an agenda of the Congress constructive programme, although there was very little difference between the two programmes since the immediate beneficiaries of both the programmes were the local people.

In December 1927, the *East Coast*, edited by Godavarish Mishra from Ganjam, and the *Young Utkal*, published by Bhubanananda Das, apprehended a major misappropriation of relief funds (to the tune of Rs 42,000), since the statements on expenditure had not been furnished by the relief committee. They indirectly referred to Gopabandhu, who was the secretary of the Committee.[138] Gopabandhu took the matter sportively and published the details of income and expenditure of the relief funds in newspapers. This freed him from the charges of corruption.[139]

In the latter half of 1924, Godavarish Mishra, who had been appointed auditor by the UPCC to enquire into the embezzlement charges in Sambalpur, was alleged to have misappropriated funds to the tune of Rs 14,000 as a board member of the Banapur Cooperative Bank.[140] A criminal case was filed against him as well as against two of his colleagues at Puri.[141] Unusual silence in the nationalist circles over the case showed that the government allegation might have had some concrete basis.

Such allegations were not confined to the leaders alone. In mid-1924, even an ordinary Congress worker of Cuttack, Khairat Ali,

[137] FRBO, File No. 112 of 1925, December, *Home Poll*; *Sakti* quoted, in the *Asha*, 23 November 1925.

[138] Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 24 December 1927, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, Cuttack, 1978, p. 297; *Asha*, 13 February 1928.

[139] *Samaj*, 7 January 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, pp. 298–303.

[140] *Gadjat Basini*, 22 November 1924.

[141] *Searchlight*, 17 May 1925; *Sadhana*, 1 October 1925; *Asha*, 4 May 1925.

was alleged to have embezzled *khadi* funds to the tune of Rs 2,100. Despite several notices by the president of the Khadi Board, he neither did any *khadi* work nor did he refund the money, complained the nationalist press.[142]

"Embezzlement" was largely attributed to the inflow of "outside" money for the nationalists' constructive programme. A section of the Congress, therefore, resisted the inflow of such money, for its worth was never realized unless it was raised within.[143] Thus, the group believed, on the one hand, such funds led to corruption and, on the other hand, the purpose (for example, constructive work) was seldom served. Nationalists like Gopabandhu Choudhury, Pranakrishna Padihary and Bhagirathi Mohapatra belonging to this section of the Congress distanced themselves from such funds, but maintained a national school, *ashram* and quietly did all varieties of constructive work such as the spread of *khadi*, campaigns against untouchability and for prohibition, village reconstruction and the like at Jagatsinghpur with the funds raised from within the locality.

To raise funds, they engaged in rice and cotton cultivation, spinning and weaving and in local collection, locally called *mustibhikya*, alms collected for a noble cause. Similarly, in 1927–28, at a village called Tarikunda in Cuttack district, Nabakrishna Choudhury, Malati Choudhury and a few other Congress activists concentrated on constructive activities. To sustain it financially and to maintain themselves, they engaged in farming and collection of funds at the local level. They did so for they strongly believed in the inner potentials of a society for its constructive and reconstructive work.[144] Today, when the "nation" and the "nationalists" consider foreign (outside) funding and help imperative for nation building, the alternative of inner help and local funding, which this small group of nationalists had opted for and offered at the time of the non-active phase of the nationalist struggle, becomes more relevant than ever before.

[142] *UD*, 2 August 1924; *Puribasi*, 5 August 1924.
[143] Gopabandhu Choudhury quoted in Gopinath Mohanti, *Dhuli Matir Santha*, p. 88.
[144] *Puribasi*, 20 May 1924; See, Dwivedy, *Nabakrishna Choudhry*; Chittaranjan Das, *Sri Nabakrishna Choudhury*: *Eka Jibani*, Cuttack, 1992, pp. 20–22.

I.d

At the height of serious differences within the party, communal tension mounted in parts of Bhadrak, Balasore, Soro, Cuttack, Sambalpur and Ganjam in 1926.[145] In Balasore district alone there were 10 communal riots between April and October 1926.[146]

In early July 1925, the *Asha* reported about Hindu–Muslim communal riots in different parts of the country such as Calcutta, Lucknow and Delhi. Of all these, the Calcutta riots got more coverage and had a greater impact, because of the close proximity to Orissa and the greater seriousness of the riots.[147] The impact on Oriya society was quite apparent, though it did not take the form of either riots or even press reporting. In fact, the following month, the nationalist *Asha* heaved a sigh of relief that "Mohurram went off peacefully in Cuttack", which had a sizeable Muslim population. Making the situation more obscure, it commented that there was "no scope for tension". [148]

However, the tension beneath the apparently peaceful situation could not escape Gandhi's attention who, during his visit to Cuttack on 19 August 1925, attended a public meeting organized by the local Christians at a church, met the Muslims and profusely thanked the local people for not letting communal tension spread in Orissa.[149] In February 1926, the *Asha* condemned communal tension as the root cause of all national problems and wished that the news had remained confined to India, for "it exposes the weaknesses of a nation". Further, the newspaper expressed its happiness that the communal problem was so far an "urban centred" one and had not "germinated in the countryside as yet".[150]

All these good words, however, did not succeed and Orissa came under the communal wave in mid-1926. The first instance was witnessed in Sambalpur where two teachers—one Muslim and the

[145] FRBO, File No. 18 of 1926, June, *Home Poll.*
[146] *Searchlight*, 14 October 1927.
[147] *Asha*, 6 and 13 July 1925.
[148] *Asha*, 3 August 1925.
[149] *Asha*, 24 August 1925.
[150] *Asha*, 15 February 1926.

other Hindu—of the local zilla school lambasted each other in full view of the students in early March 1926. It took a communal turn and the situation became tense for sometime.[151] This solitary event would have been ephemeral, had it not been followed by a series of communal riots in Calcutta in April 1926.[152] Many people were killed; the tension spread to other parts of eastern India, including Orissa.

In fact, at this point of time, a section of the nationalist press played a crucial role in spreading the tension. For example, while reporting the Calcutta riots in April 1926, the *Asha*'s ire against the Muslims was more than apparent when it said that they "destroyed a Shiv temple" in Calcutta and added that "thousands of Hindus" had been rendered "homeless". Setting a direct link between the Calcutta riots and Orissa, the *Asha* discovered "one Oriya woman" as the riot victim, for she had been "gangraped by some Muslim youth" there on 21 March 1926.[153]

In the same issue, the *Asha* discussed two different events in Ganjam district and appealed to "Pundit Gopabandhu Das" to pay some attention to them. One incident was about a girl from Badkhemundi who was allegedly kidnapped by some Muslims, while the other incident mentioned that some agricultural women had been allegedly sold to a Christian mission. "In such circumstances it is a matter of great regret that the Hindus remain indifferent", commented the paper.[154]

As if this was not enough to flare up communal feelings in society, the *Asha* analyzed the Calcutta incident, praised the "valiant Hindus" and concluded, "earlier due to timidity of the Hindus, the *Pathan*s [the term is used for Muslims in a derogatory sense in Oriya] could easily indulge in such activities. Henceforth, it is hoped that, the *Pathan goonda*s would surely realize that this is no more a one-sided game. Both the sides are of equal strength. Once the Muslims know that the Hindus are equally strong, they [the Muslims] would

[151] *Asha*, 15 March 1926.
[152] Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 233.
[153] *Asha*, 5 April 1926.
[154] *Ibid.*

not attack. Not for fighting alone, even for peaceful living one must be sufficiently strong".[155] Such communal sentiments were also visible in reports coming in *Prajatantra*, which reportedly incited the Hindus by publishing "rumours that the local Mahammadans had thrown flesh and bones of cows into a temple as well as into the houses of leading Hindus" in Balasore district in mid-1926.[156] Besides, the *UD* and the *Sadhana* also blamed the outsider Muslim traders from Bombay for mobilizing the local Muslims to attack Hindu marriage processions and *kirtan* troupes passing outside the mosques in Balasore.[157]

By the first half of May, tension spread to all districts in the state and more cases of riots were feared at the ensuing Bakr Id.[158] On 1 May 1926, intense Hindu retaliation began in the form of a protest meeting (against alleged government support to the Muslims) and a large demonstration with communal sloganerring was held at Balasore. The *kirtan* ceremony began in the town against the ban orders and was attacked by Muslims.[159] On 1 July, the *kirtan* was followed by a Muslim attack on the *Balasore Swaraj Ashram*.[160] In the police complaint, 18 Hindu leaders were named. "The Hindus also lodged eight complaints against the Muslims", reported the *Asha*.[161] A few days later, some seven Muslim youth headed by a Muslim police constable assaulted a Hindu and created disturbance in the Balasore market area. The Hindus, in retaliation, burnt down some houses and damaged some brick kilns belonging to Muslims. A large meeting with some 1,500 Hindus was held which decided to socially ostracize the Muslims.[162]

The riots, which were confined to Balasore till then, spread to other places very soon. On 8 June 1926, a Hindu marriage procession which was passing along a mosque, "after due

[155] *Asha*, 12 April 1926.
[156] FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, January, June and September, *Home Poll*.
[157] *UD*, 12 June 1926; *Sadhana*, 13 May 1926; *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[158] FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, May, *Home Poll*.
[159] *Sadhana*, 13 May 1926.
[160] *UD*, 12 June 1926; *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[161] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[162] FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, January, June and September, *Home Poll*.

magisterial permission", was lambasted by the Muslims at Soro, a small town in the Balasore district. Armed police had to rush in to quell the disturbance. A shop was looted and the *Asha* feared more tension there in the "near future".[163] On 19 June, a riot occurred at Bhadrak when a Hindu religious procession passing along the Yusufpur mosque was stopped and in the resultant clash a few persons belonging to both the communities sustained minor injuries.[164]

In June, Sambalpur also came under the grip of communal tension. On 2 June, one Rajendra Das was physically assaulted by a group of Muslim youth. Soon after, Jharsuguda became tense. Immediate police action in the form of deployment of police personnel, however, restrained the tension from growing into large-scale rioting.[165] In July, more trouble was feared all over the district as well as in Balasore. There was one more case of rioting at Soro, and Balasore continued to be tense throughout August 1926.[166] Though the government report remained silent thereafter, the press could sense the communal tension in Orissa even in October 1926.[167]

In Parlekhemundi, the local Christians suffered the brunt of communal tension when "hundreds of Hindus" reportedly attacked them in early June 1926. This compelled many Christians, who were in minority in their respective villages, to rush to Narayanpur and Rajagad, the Christian majority villages, for shelter. There was Christian retaliation too. One Hindu was physically injured at Narayanpur. In retaliation, the Hindus assaulted the Christians in Bamika, Karasandha and Rajagad village. In Narayanpur, Christian households were also looted in the process.[168]

In terms of material and physical casualties, the communal tension in Orissa was, probably, not very grave compared to that in

[163] FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, January, June and September, *Home Poll*; *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[164] *Asha*, 28 June 1926; FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, January, June and September, *Home Poll*.
[165] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[166] FRBO, File No. 112/IV of 1926, July and August, *Home Poll*.
[167] *Searchlight*, 14 October 1927.
[168] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.

many other parts of the country. Though the tension had engulfed many places, communal rioting was confined to a few pockets in the state. Further, barring a solitary case of Hindu–Christian riot, the violence was mainly confined to the Hindus and the Muslims. Similarly, there was no case of killing, though quite a few physical assaults, stabbing and looting incidents were reported. Yet, the unprecedented growth of communal feelings and its outward manifestations in a relatively peaceful state like Orissa had an impact on similar forces in other parts of the state.

Nationalists with a Hindu tinge were not rare in Indian politics. During the post-1922 period, some such nationalists came together and formed the Independent Congress Party to represent the Hindu interests under the leadership of Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and N.C. Kelkar in 1925. Known as the Responsivists, they mainly came from the Swarajist camp and had resolved to cooperate with the government for safeguarding "Hindu interests".

Cutting across party lines, some prominent Swarajist and non-Swarajist leaders such as Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das and Bhubanananda Das came forward to safeguard the Hindu interests in Orissa with organizational linkages with the Responsivists and the Independent Congress Party at the national level. They attended the first conference of the party[169], while Bhubanananda joined the party and represented it in the Central Legislative Assembly,[170] Gopabandhu and Nilakantha alongwith a section of the UPCC, particularly the Ganjam DCC including its leaders Sashi Bhusan Rath and Iswar Sahu, openly sympathized with the Responsivists' efforts at least after late 1925.[171]

Gopabandhu's proximity to Lajpat Rai resulted in the establishment of a unit of the Servants of People's Society at Cuttack in February 1926. Gopabandhu was a member of the society, which ran a library at its Cuttack unit office to intensify ideological campaigns in the state. Soon after, the *Samaj* as an institution was

[169] S.N. Patnaik, *Odisare Swadhinata Andolanar Itihas*, Cuttack, 1972, p. 58.
[170] *Asha*, 26 April 1926.
[171] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.

also affiliated to it.[172] Because of its association, the *Samaj,* now a unit of the Servants of People's Society, wrote extensively on Malaviya and Lajpat Rai and provided them the ideological support in their *Suddhi* Movement and Hindu Mahasabha campaign.[173] Lajpat Rai visited Orissa in April 1926 on Gopabandhu's request and addressed public meetings at several places. The society, on the other hand, helped Gopabandhu and his *Satyavadi* friends in the flood relief work.[174] A home for the widows in Puri, which championed conservatism by "opposing widow remarriage"[175] at the behest of Gopabandhu Das, also got monetary support from Lala Lajpat Rai and his organizations. Named as the *Jagannath Bidhabashram*, the widow home was a brainchild of Gopabandhu Das for giving shelter to the Hindu widows who had been persuaded to not remarry.[176]

Gopabandhu's tilt towards Hindu politics became crystallized after he founded the Orissa unit of the Hindu Mahasabha in mid-1926, following Lala Lajpat Rai's visit. Soon after, Gopabandhu justified the *Suddhi* Movement for re-conversion into Hinduism and the like and advocated for organizing the Hindus on semi-military lines. Further, he also asked the Orissa Muslims "not to be scared of this development in their neighbourhood" and urged them to be "careful about a few alien Muslims" who mislead them and bring disrespect to them.[177] His Hindu tilt, however, did not clash with his Oriya regional identity which he had been championing then, probably because he took the non-Hindus to be a very small minority in the state. Hence, his association with the Hindu Mahasabha, his sympathy for the Independent Congress Party and his wish for an "Orissa Party" went hand in hand.[178]

[172] *Samaj*, 11 June 1927, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, pp. 369–70.
[173] *Samaj*, 9 July 1927, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VII, p. 216; *Samaj*, 26 February 1927, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, p. 355.
[174] FRBO, File No. 112 of 1926, February, *Home Poll*; *Samaj*, 11 June 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 370.
[175] *Asha*, 26 July 1926.
[176] *Asha*, 8 March 1926.
[177] Das in *Samaj*, 5 June 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, pp. 329–30.
[178] *Searchlight*, 29 September 1926; Gopabandhu believed that candidates, irrespective of their political affiliations, should be elected to the councils in 1926, provided they wished to champion the cause of Orissa. *Samaj*, 17 April 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, p. 295.

Gopabandhu was not alone in having such subtle communal inclinations. Many Congressmen and a powerful section of the vernacular press also subscribed to such ideas. As a result, since the latter half of 1925, the newspapers abounded with communal stories and reporting in the state. The communal riots of 1926 could be directly attributed to these developments.

The genesis of Hindu mobilization could be traced to the social reforms in the late nineteenth century Orissa. The issues taken up by the reformist intellectuals were basically Hindu problems. For example, child marriage, widow remarriage, old widowers' marriage, dependence on scriptural guidance or the custom of throwing dead bodies into the river were some of the issues which had been raised from the Hindu angle. The non-Hindus, of whom the Muslims constituted the majority, had many basic problems, but the intelligentsia's appeal for reforms did not cover them. They were confined mostly to Hindus. In their enthusiasm they probably overlooked the non-Hindus in society. This was evident from their overt condemnation of the pre-British period (in Orissa), especially the "Muslim period", as oppressive.[179] This necessarily widened the gap between the two religious communities, but the ramifications were probably invisible to the intelligentsia, because the local Muslim community, besides being numerically weak, was not much associated with these efforts which were largely confined to issues of reading and writing. But it helped in the spread of communal ideology among the local Hindu middle classes.

During the post-NCM period, there was renewed emphasis on social reforms, which got sanctity in the garb of the Congress' constructive work. The Congressmen were the reformists now. Besides the issues of women's education, *khadi,* child marriage and cow protection became a pet agenda for many of these Congress constructive workers. For example, while Lingaraj Mahapatra started a *Gorakkhini Samaj* (cow protection committee) at Sorada, Jaymangal Rath,

[179] For Fakir Mohan, while the British period was the golden age, the "Muslim Period" was worse than all other periods in history. Senapati, *FMG,* Vol. II, pp. 678–79.

a prominent No-changer formed one *Utkal Arya Samaj* and planned to hold its conference alongside the UUC at Berhampur as early as in March 1923.[180] One of the resolutions of the Bolgarh Conference (November 1925) organized under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das, appealed to the people not to sell their old cows to the slaughter houses, for "cows are invaluable in an agrarian country" like India.[181] Even issues like untouchability were gaining importance, because "Hindu *unnati*" (progress) was "unthinkable" without eradicating it.[182] Probably such blatant portrayal of "Hindu interests" as national interests had to have its ramifications in society as it had in 1926.

Against such a background, Nilakantha Das campaigned for the Hindu Mahasabha, raised funds for starting a provincial unit of the Mahasabha and devised an elaborate plan for starting *goshala*s (cow shelter and protection centres) and *byayamshala*s (gymnastic centres) for the training of Hindu youth in December 1925.[183] The Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha blended with each other in districts like Ganjam where leaders such as Sashi Bhusan Rath, Iswar Sahu, Lingaraj Mahapatra, Nilakanta Das attended meetings of both the organizations. Moreover, the committee meetings of both the organizations were held at the same venue, namely, *Utkalashram* in Berhampur. This in a way exemplified the complete integration of the communal organization with the Congress at the local level.[184]

It was around this time that, Biswanath Hota, a young Congress worker, formed a Hindu defensive squad called the *Birastami Akhadadal* under the guidance of Harekrishna Mahatab at Balasore.[185] During the height of communal tension, the squad led the Hindu processions and organized "protest meetings" in 1926. The close identification of the Balasore local Congress with the

[180] *Asha*, 12 March 1923.
[181] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.
[182] *Asha*, 13 July 1925.
[183] *Asha*, 14 December 1925.
[184] *Asha*, 13 July 1925.
[185] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 103.

Hindu communal groups was evident from the Muslims attack on the local *swaraj ashram* in early 1926.[186]

During the communal tension, the *Asha* blamed the Muslim community, "barring a few Muslim youth as in Aligarh", for the trouble, while the UD singled out the "alien" (non-Oriya) Muslims for instigating communal problems in Orissa.[187] "The Muslims are always busy organizing movements for communal gains ….The *pathan*s [a term used for the Muslims in a derogatory sense] are giving priority to their immediate gains at the cost of higher and nobler goals of Swaraj of the country", the *Asha* concluded in one of its editorials in March 1926.[188] In another editorial, it showered praise on Madan Mohan Malaviya who "considered *'chamars'* [untouchables] as superior to the Christians and Muslims, because the former belonged to the Hindus".[189]

The *Asha*'s Hindu communal face became quite apparent when it described the Calcutta communal riots of 1925–26 as a great victory for the Hindus. It wrote "at the end of the riot", it was clear that the Muslims were defeated and their leaders were proved to be fake [communal]. Second, the riot experimented with the Hindu strength which had been consolidated now and would be safeguarded for future use. Further, the riot had also reportedly proved that the two communities, the Hindu and the Muslims, cannot be united by "non-violent, non-cooperation means". However, the Calcutta "*golmal*" (a term used for describing communal riots) proved that, a small number of Muslims ("Calcutta had 70 per cent Hindus against a mere 25 per cent Muslims") could harass the majority Hindus. "It could be safely concluded that, the timidity of the Hindus is primarily responsible for such lambasting by the Muslims".[190]

In the aftermath of the NCM, while one section of the Congress was attracted to Hindu communalism, another section among the

[186] *UD*, 12 June 1926; *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[187] *Asha*, 1 March 1926; *UD*, 12 June 1926.
[188] *Asha*, 1 March 1926.
[189] *Asha*, 22 March 1926.
[190] *Asha*, 3 May 1926.

Muslim nationalists veered towards Muslim communalism. Unfortunately, neither the press nor the official sources have vivisected the varied Muslim communal responses in Orissa during the period. The Muslim community has been seen as a nucleus unit without any reference to their leaders or to the various trends within. But it is a fact that the Muslim's politicization had been taking place in Orissa. It was apparent in the form of their intense participation during the NCM, especially at the time of voting in 1920. After the communal divides in 1925–26, the *Asha* feared that it might affect the Congress prospects in the elections of November 1926, for the Muslims might turn against the INC.[191] The veering of a group of Muslims to communal politics got crystallized when a branch of the Muslim League was constituted at Kendrapada in February 1927. Initiated probably by some former Khilafat activities, the branch in a meeting resolved to collect funds for the Muslim League. Other resolutions included appeals to the Muslims to offer *namaz* regularly and to send their wards to the *madarsa*s.[192] Withdrawal to traditional religion was probably considered the best available defence by the Muslim leadership against the Hindu onslaught.

However, the nationalists' understanding of the communal issues during the period was not unilinear in its appearance. A kind of ambivalence apparent in the approach makes the analysis all the more complex. For example, Gopabandhu Das, the tallest of all leaders in Orissa, was clear in his empathy for the *Suddhi* Movement and the Hindu Mahasabha, extended support to the Independent Congress Party and even justified the formation of the Hindu defensive squad. But, at the same time, there are innumerable instances when he took a very different position for the solution of communal tensions in the country during the period.

While reacting to the Calcutta riots of 1926, he wrote:

> During the Calcutta riots the Hindus have exhibited their strength and courage. Many people think, both the Hindu and the Muslim

[191] *Asha*, 21 June 1926.
[192] *Puribasi*, 1 March 1927.

> communities would be friendly to each other henceforth. After such intra-fighting both would realize each other's strength. They would either fear each other or respect each other. But friendliness after such ghastly actions cannot become natural. Both the Hindus and the Muslims have religious differences. The differences would persist in the future as well. It is also natural that there would be some minor tension between the two. But there is a need for the spread of some other feelings which would overcome the religious differences and lead to unity between the two. Like religion another dearest component [of society] is motherland and its love. Love for one's motherland is a very dear feeling for everybody. With the growth of this feeling religious differences would subside for all Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains and Buddhists. Indian motherland is supreme. India's national unity is impossible so long as love for the nation has not become one's *dharma* and service to the nation one's main priority. There are many other countries in the world, where religious strife used to be very common in the past. Now they are no more countries like that. Nationalism has been sweeping across them. We are not pessimists. Such good days are imminent in India too.[193]

In another reaction to the Calcutta riots, he described the Hindus and the Muslims as two brothers living in this country for hundreds of years. "They cannot be separated in the future as well. Will they be happy, if they kill each other?"[194]

Like the Press, Gopabandhu also blamed the "outsiders" (non-local Muslims) for the trouble in Orissa and appealed to the local Muslims to form defensive squads, like their Hindu neighbours, to check the influx of such trouble makers into their society.[195]

Ambivalence was also a characteristic of the *Asha* and its founder, Sashi Bhusan Rath, a Congress leader and a member of the Legislative Council (MLC) in the Madras Presidency Council. During the height of communal tension, it (the *Asha*) supported the Hindu Mahasabha in its communal venture. In one of its classic

[193] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 17 April 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, pp. 297–98.
[194] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 8 May 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, p. 310.
[195] Gopabandhu Das in *Samaj*, 29 May 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VIII, p. 321.

statements, it quoted the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and appealed to Hindu women to defend their honour even at the cost of their life. It hoped that the "oppressive *goonda*s" [read Muslims] would surely, bow down "before the valour of the Hindu women".[196] In another editorial, it questioned the Hindu communalists who justified the attack on Muslims, for the latter slaughtered cows. "But, the Muslims are not the lone killers of cows; The *Saheb*s kill not less than one million cows; the 'low' caste Hindus kill nearly 1.5 million cows every year. In such a situation why should there be a ban on cow slaughter at the time of Bakr Id alone?" the *Asha* asked.[197]

Some nationalists, however, remained above all communal politics and advocated a purely secular line of political thought among the people. The *Sadhana*, not exactly a Congress organ, but definitely a nationalist paper from Sambalpur, believed that there would be perfect harmony between the different communities only after the departure of the *Yabana*s (foreigners).[198] The Muslims were like any other community of Orissa and were even more neglected than others by the British government, it pointed out.[199] Referring to the murder of Swami Sraddhananda by a Muslim fanatic, the *Puribasi*, another nationalist newspaper which strongly believed in the Hindu faith and vehemently objected to conversion to Christainity, wrote in January 1927 that the Muslims and their religion in general could not be held responsible for such a mindless act. After all, the Muslim leaders had condemned the act and "such criminal elements [who had committed the killing] are not new to any specific religious community". It thus generalized the incident in order to ease the tension.[200] The *Sadhana*, another strong believer in the Hindu faith, predicted that "unless there was complete communal harmony, even thousands of *khadi* centres and lakhs of Congress workers could not bring *Swaraj* to the nation". While

[196] *Asha*, 8 March 1926.
[197] *Asha*, 26 July 1926.
[198] *Sadhana*, 13 May 1926.
[199] *Sadhana*, 23 July 1923.
[200] *Puribasi*, 18 January 1927.

commenting on the Hindus' complaints about cow slaughter and Muslims' complaints about music in front of mosques, it wrote that these had existed for a long time, but had never created a communal clash in the past. In fact, "such pretexts were discovered to unleash communal tension", it asserted.[201] Similarly, Jaymangal Rath, a Congress worker from Ganjam, prognosticated that Indian independence would be a daydream unless people gave up their religious differences and resolved to grow as an all India *jati*.[202] Such secular elements and unbiased views by a section of the nationalists, despite their religious undertone, proved to be a ray of hope for the future at the height of communal strife in different parts of society.

It would be quite simplistic to sub-divide and to reduce the Congress of 1923–27 into a party of different factions and of corrupt, parochial and communal elements. It is a fact that such elements existed there and their relative growth could be explained in terms of absence of any radical actions. For example, the politicization of both Hindus and Muslims during the NCM led to intra-fighting later on. It was apparent in the form of communal tension during 1923–27. Similarly, despite the official opposition from the No-changers' quarters, the council elections attracted the attention of all sections of nationalists, because of its capacity to keep up the political momentum. But, in the absence of the "enemy"[203] party, that is, the government, squabbling and mud slinging within the Congress became quite common. In fact, such developments were slowly becoming a part of the nationalist politics and their beginnings could be seen during the period under study. After the launch of a mass movement, that is, the NCM, the Congress was fast becoming a mass party with many groups of nationalists who came under its shade. Now there were several trends which would work together at the time of the active movement phase, but would

[201] *Sadhana*, 14 October 1926.
[202] *Asha*, 3 May 1926.
[203] The press as well as the leaders often mentioned that as per the peoples' understanding there were two parties, that is, the Congress and the government party, which got reflected in the voting behaviour in 1923 as well as in the 1926 elections. *Asha*, 3 December 1923.

exhibit their differences when the active phase was at low ebb. Many of the nationalists' understanding of issues like communalism was also one-sided because the problem (communalism particularly) was quite new and threw new challenges before them.

However, the discussion also allows us to see a distinct trend within the Congress, which even during those days of non-active phase strongly resented the "other" tendencies and slowly emerged as a powerful alternative group within the party. Though small during the said period, it consciously remained aloof from "outside funds", lest it might fall into the trap of corruption.[204] It opposed parochialism and forcefully advocated for the integration of the regional forces into the broader framework of the anti-colonial movement.[205] It also vehemently objected to both Hindu and Muslim communalism and laid emphasis on a secular line of political thought.[206] It was probably a matter of great optimism that, with the passing away of the "non-active phase of movement", this particular trend became very powerful in the Congress in Orissa probably because of its general acceptability to all other trends. For example, Gopabandhu Choudhury, one of its representatives, emerged as the leader of the Provincial Congress in 1928.[207] In the years to come, no doubt the party as a mass party contained various political trends, but the reins of control remained in the hands of such secular leadership. Probably because of this the foundations of the nationalist struggle as well as of India as a modern nation could become stronger in future.

II

The split in the Congress into the Swarajists and non-Swarajists or Pro-changers and No-changers in 1923 on the issue of council entry had far reaching consequences on the nationalist politics in the

[204] Gopabandhu Choudhury quoted in Gopinath Mohanti, *Dhuli Matir Santha*, p. 88.
[205] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1923, April, *Home Poll.*
[206] *Sadhana*, 14 October 1926.
[207] *Asha*, 12 January 1929.

aftermath of the NCM. The politics of the Swarajists centred around council elections scheduled to be held in November 1923. Following their victory in the elections, they (the Swarajists) highlighted various administrative and political issues and vehemently criticized the government for its inability to solve them in the councils. The non-Swarajists, on the other hand, resolved to stick to the constructive programme, which included campaign for *khadi*, prohibition and flood relief.

II.a

The majority of the Congressmen remained No-changers in Orissa during the period. Soon after the Gaya Congress of 1922, the UPCC met in Cuttack on 12 January 1923 and extended support to the constructive programme, which was considered to be the preparatory phase for the forthcoming civil disobedience campaign of the No-changers as decided at the Gaya Congress.[208] Among other resolutions, it condemned the "death sentences on 177 people" for their involvement in the "Chauri Chauri incident". Besides, the UPCC resolved to accelerate the collection of *swaraj* funds by reconstituting the fund committee and by appealing to all the DCCs to collect funds. For intensifying *khadi* work, it was suggested that each DCC adopt a small locality in the region.[209] Following the UPCC meet, the district units and a few sub-divisional units also held their annual sessions and reiterated their faith in the constructive programme. For example, the Balasore DCC, under the presidentship of Rajakrishna Bose on 22 and 23 April 1923,[210] the Singhbhum DCC under the presidentship of Anant Mishra on 16 November 1923,[211] the Ganjam DCC on 7 July 1923,[212] and the

[208] *Searchlight*, 19 January 1923.
[209] *Samaj*, 27 January 1923; *Asha*, 19 March 1923, felt very happy to announce that the Chauri Chaura rebels were being defended by a very able lawyer, M.M. Malaviya, in court. The death sentences given to 177 persons were not acceptable to the nationalist press because many of them were not guilty of the crime.
[210] *Samaj*, 28 April 1923.
[211] *Searchlight*, 26 November 1923.
[212] *Asha*, 9 July 1923.

Jagatsinghpur and the Bhadrak sub-divisional units on 29 June and 13 May 1923 held their sessions. In all those conferences the presidents were usually known non-Swarajists and resolutions were passed unanimously in support of the constructive programme.[213]

Interestingly, the No-changers' efforts to reorganize the UPCC were not openly opposed by the other group that was supposedly close to the Swarajists and called themselves Swarajists in Orissa. In Orissa, the Swarajists without any formal party organization were a loose group and could be broadly termed as Pro-changers for their support to the council entry programme. One such leader, Sashi Bhusan Rath, who was a member of the Madras Legislative Council from Berhampur, welcomed the non-cooperators' plan to hold their annual session alongside the UUC in the same pandal at Berhampur on 31 March and 1 April 1923.[214] At the same time, Rath also requested the non-cooperators not to attempt to capture the UUC forum. He regretted that there was unnecessary squabbling within the party, though the basic goal of all nationalists was the same.[215] Similarly, Jaymangal Rath, a prominent non-Swarajist from Ganjam did not see any contradiction between the UUC, which had been under the Swarajists control then, and the UPCC, which was under the control of the non-Swarajists, and appealed to all UUC leaders to take up the constructive work sincerely.[216]

Such goodwill and cooperation between the two groups was, however, not always very common. For example, when Kalpataru Das, a liberal leader and lawyer from Cuttack, was selected to preside over the UUC of 1923, as the *Asha* observed, the non-cooperators strongly objected to it in the *Samaj* and the *UD*.[217]

[213] *Samaj*, 26 May and 7 July 1923.
[214] The UUC pandal was used for various nationalist meetings such as the All Orissa Congress Workers' Conference and UPCC meeting (29 and 30 March), Ganjam DCC meeting (1 April), Social Reforms Conference (2 April) and Non-Cooperator Students' Conference (2 April). *Asha* 26 March 1923.
[215] *Asha*, 26 February 1923.
[216] *Asha*, 12 March 1923.
[217] *Asha*, 26 March 1923.

In its reaction, the UUC rejected the resolutions given by the non-cooperators and compelled the No-changers to resign from its Subjects Committee.[218]

In mid-1923, some prominent Congressmen such as Harekrishna Mahatab and A.B. Acharya were released from jail, which added to the No-changers' strength. This was evident in the UPCC meetings held at Balasore on 29 June 1923 and at Cuttack on 11 December 1923. The Balasore meeting held soon after Mahatab's release witnessed participation from all DCCs including far-off Sambalpur and Singhbhum, which had sent one delegate each. The Cuttack, Balasore and Ganjam DCCs sent 11 members, 10 members and seven members respectively, while the Puri DCC sent six delegates to the meeting. The enthusiasm was apparent when Mahatab was elected the party secretary and the meeting reiterated the UPCC's support to the decision of the Gaya Congress with regard to the issue of council entry. Nilakantha Das, who acted as the president resigned from the post, for he had decided to contest the forthcoming council elections. The UPCC meeting also constituted a three-member committee to enquire into the Kanika issue.[219]

The No-changers' position got further consolidated at the UPCC's Cuttack meeting on 11 December 1923. The meeting held after the council elections had clearly polarized the UPCC into two camps. The No-changers dominated the scene and demanded that only their supporters be nominated to the UPCC as well as to the AICC. Finally, a compromise was struck and the Swarajists were permitted to suggest three names to each of the bodies. Accordingly, Kripasindhu Mishra, Lingaraj Mishra and Nilakantha Das were nominated to the AICC and Nilakantha Das, Kripasindhu Mishra and Birkishor Das were nominated to the UPCC Executive Committee. The nine-member No-changers' list included Niranjan Patnaik, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Harekrishna Mahatab, Krishna Prasad Mohanty, Rajkrishna Bose, Nabakrishna Choudhury,

[218] *Asha*, 9 April 1923.
[219] *Asha*, 9 July 1923.

A.B. Acharya, Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra. Since the last two members were still in jail, Banchhanidhi Mohanty and Govind Mishra were nominated to represent them at the AICC. In the UPCC Executive Committee, Niranjan Patnaik, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Banchhanidhi Mohanty, Ekram Rasul, Narasingha Chyau Patnaik, Jaymangal Rath, Nabakrishna Choudhury and Rajkrishna Bose represented the No-changers.[220]

Organizationally, the Swarajists remained a small group in Orissa and preferred to work within the No-changer–dominated UPCC.[221] Only the few who took part in the council elections of 1923 such as Nilakantha Das, Bhubanananda Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Godavarish Mishra, Sashi Bhusan Rath, Biswanath Das and Ram Narayan Mishra formed the core of the group.[222] Nilakantha Das, who later became the secretary of the party in the Central Legislative Assembly, was even undecided about joining the Swarajists during the elections and preferred to be "guided by the Congress" after winning the elections.[223] Similarly, as the press observed, the two candidates from Sambalpur, Ram Narayan Mishra and Shankar Prasad Mishra, were neither "non-cooperators" (read Congress) nor were they seen as opponents of the Congress.[224] In other words, all those nationalists who contested and won the elections formed a loose group which could be identified with the Swarajists at the national plane. They were voted to the councils and assembly, because in popular parlance they were opponents to the "government party", which belonged to a few anti-Congress princes, zamindars and their supporters.[225] In other words, the contemporary politics was seen in terms of a sharp polarized development between two main parties, that is, the Congress Party and the government party. All those who opposed the Congress were perceived as the government party and all those who opposed the government were the "Congress Party", in popular parlance. In such a situation,

[220] *Searchlight*, 21 December 1923.
[221] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[222] *Searchlight*, 4 December 1923.
[223] *Asha*, 12 November 1923.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] *Asha*, 3 December 1923.

categories like Swarajists and non-Swarajists were often irrelevant to the people.

In the elections, Nilakantha and Bhubanananda Das contested for the Central Legislative Assembly, while Godavarish (Khurda), Jagabandhu (South Puri) and Ram Narayan Mishra (Sambalpur) contested for B&O Legislative Council.[226] Sashi Bhusan Rath and Biswanath Das contested from Ganjam for the Madras Council. All of them won.[227]

During the elections, the No-changers officially remained aloof from any electoral campaign. Long before, the Jagatsinghpur Sub-Divisional Congress in its annual conference on 29 June 1923 even passed a resolution to keep away from elections.[228] On the eve of polling, the secretary of the Cuttack DCC issued a press statement to clarify that the Congress had no candidate in the elections and the party members who were contesting were doing so in their individual capacity.[229] The Congress members, however, did not remain indifferent. They silently supported the Swarajists. A few among them such as Dibya Singh Panigrahi from Puri even appealed to the people in the press in support of the Swarajists.[230] On the other hand, there were also Congress workers like Jayamangal Rath who believed that a No-changer had no time for elections because of the pressure of constructive work.[231]

Barring the *Samaj*, probably all nationalist newspapers took sides in the elections. In Sambalpur, the *Sadhana* supported Ram Narayan Mishra, while the *US* openly campaigned for Shankar Prasad Mishra.[232] The *UD* appealed to the voters to support the Swarajist candidates.[233] The *Asha*, whose editor Sashi Bhusan Rath was a candidate himself, was no less than a Swarajists' press during the period.

[226] *UD*, 10 November 1923.
[227] *Searchlight*, 4 December 1923; *Asha*, 3 December 1923.
[228] *Samaj*, 7 July 1923.
[229] *UD*, 24 November 1923.
[230] *Samaj*, 10 November and 17 November 1923.
[231] *Asha*, 23 July 1923.
[232] *Sadhana*, 12 November 1923.
[233] *UD*, 10 November 1923.

The Swarajists' campaign was out and out anti-government and pro-Congress in nature. Their rival candidates were shown as anti-Congress and pro-government elements. Their (the Swarajists') banking on the image of the Congress and depiction of the elections as an extension of the Congress programme aimed at projecting a united voice of the party. The split and the formation of groups within the INC had very little impact at the popular level. It also showed that the Congress enjoyed wide popular support despite the lull in its mass action programmes after the NCM.

Bhubanananda Das, who after a successful academic career at the Glasgow University of the United Kingdom had joined the Bombay Corporation as an engineer only to resign after some time in protest against racial discrimination (an European superseded him in office), declared in his various public meetings that their (Swarajists') election to the councils and the Assembly would accelerate the process of *swaraj*. In his press statements, he promised to fight for (*a*) the attainment of *swaraj*, (*b*) Indianization of executive services, (*c*) Indianization of the army and navy, (*d*) assessment of taxes only by the representatives of the people, (*e*) industrial and commercial development of the nation, (*f*) discontinuity of diarchy and (*g*) a separate Orissa Province.[234]

Nilakantha Das, well-known in the Congress circle since the beginning of the *Satyavadi* days, in a leaflet dated 14 November 1923, asserted that the work of the Congress would be easier and the party would be able to accomplish more if some Congressmen went into the councils.[235] Even after the elections, the Swarajists believed council work to be an indispensable aspect of the Congress programme. In an interview with the *UD* in July 1924, Nilakantha described council work and constructive work to be equally important for the next phase of the mass movement. They were two branches of a single Congress programme. Council work was essential since constructive work would not wreck the government from within. But the last resort for both the programmes was boycott

[234] FRBO, File No. 66/VIII of 1924, December, *Home Poll*.
[235] *Ibid*.

and civil disobedience, he pointed out. Referring to the apprehension that the work in the councils might alienate the leadership from direct action in the field, he said that in that case there could be similar kind of apprehension of mindless militancy in case of constructive or field work alone. He laid emphasis on the integration of both aspects of work as a prelude to the "forthcoming mass struggle".[236]

Sashi Bhusan Rath and Biswanath Das contesting from Ganjam for the Madras Council issued a joint appeal in the press for votes. In the appeal they promised to work for the union of Orissa, extension of irrigation facilities, enhancement of primary teachers' salary, curtailment in the tour allowances of government officers, better treatment to political prisoners and against additional taxation, among other things. With regard to *swaraj*, the two leaders declared, "We believe in our country's fitness for the early attainment of *swaraj*. We believe … that our local bodies should be freed from the over centralized system of provincial government".[237]

On the eve of the elections, some "senior citizens" including a Congress worker, Raghunath Mohanty, issued a joint statement which appealed to the voters to elect only the "sincere social workers", "otherwise there would be unabated hike in taxes".[238]

True to their belief, the Swarajists highlighted the various day-to-day issues in the councils and tried to expose the nature of colonial rule. Outside the councils they also cooperated with the No-changers in organizing Congress meetings, relief works and in press campaign, etc.

Between 1923 and 1926, various basic issues were raised in the Central Legislative Assembly and in the B&O and Madras councils by the Swarajist members of Orissa. Among them, high revenue on land "without considering the paying capacity of the tax-payers and the productive power of the land"[239] often attracted the attention

[236] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[237] *Asha*, 31 September 1923.
[238] *UD*, 17 November 1923.
[239] Jagabandhu Singh on 18 August 1926, *B&O Legislative Council Procedings* (hereafter *B&O LCP*), 1924, Vol. XIV, p. 135.

of the Swarajists in the councils. Godavarish Mishra remarked that if the material condition of the people had improved and the capacity to pay created, no one would "grudge parting with a portion of his income to maintain the government". He linked up the popularity of the no-tax campaign with the incapacity of tenants to pay revenue or rent and said: "the proposal (of no-tax) appeals so much to the tenant, for he has not much in his hands to pay".[240] Commenting on the official claim that the average living standard in India had gone up, Jagabandhu Singh asked in the B&O Council on 21 February 1924, "when … people pay a heavy toll to malaria and other dreadful diseases, poverty and hunger year in and year out, how can we say, Sir, the well-being and prosperity of the people is progressing?"[241]

As a remedy to growing poverty they demanded the extension of the Permanent Settlement of land revenue to Orissa. They also asked for the development of industries and added government attention to agriculture in general. On 28 August 1924, Bhagbat Mahapatra, a zamindar member from Orissa, moved a resolution for extending Permanent Settlement to Orissa. With the support of the Swarajists, the motion was adopted by 34 votes against 29 votes.[242] But even after a year of the passing of the resolution, Permanent Settlement was not extended to Orissa. Consequently, on 18 August 1926, Jagabandhu Singh moved a resolution for fixation of the term of settlement operations in Orissa at 60 years in place of 30 years, in case Permanent Settlement was not implemented. While justifying his demand, Singh said, "I have hopelessly failed to convince the government as to the justness of the measures … government is determined not to budge an inch from their path and takes pleasure in throwing overboard the popular demands of the representatives of the people. Knowing fully well that my cries shall fall on deaf ears, I venture to move this resolution again".[243] Establishing a link between the exploitative nature of

[240] *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, 22 February 1924, pp. 475–76.
[241] *Ibid*., p. 428.
[242] *B&O LCP*, Vol. X, p. 607.
[243] *B&O LCP*, Vol. XIV, p. 134.

the government and its policy of not introducing the Permanent Settlement, he said: "the government has no other excuse for withdrawing from their solemn promise than squeezing out more money from the empty pockets of the famished people of Orissa".[244]

Temporary settlement was rejected, for the entire cost of settlement operation was borne by the tenants themselves every time and the fixation of land revenue was "purely a matter of discretion, with the young inexperienced settlement officers, most of whom were employed for the purpose".[245] Also, "the rent had already reached the maximum level and further enhancement … would be a sheer act of cruelty on the part of the British government".[246]

Besides demanding a halt to revenue enhancement, the Swarajists asked for "extension of irrigation"[247] and development of industries, for "a nation which has no industry or commerce of its own cannot be called a prosperous nation".[248] In the Central Legislative Assembly, on 5 June 1924, Bhubanananda demanded protection of Indian industries by putting a "corresponding tax on the imported agricultural implements" as a remedy for the safeguard of the "indigenous cottage industry".[249] Similarly, on 22 September 1924, Nilakantha asked the government to revive the dying indigenous salt industry on the Orissa coast which "would save the people from famine and migration and the area from ultimate de-population".[250]

In the Central Assembly as well as in the B&O Provincial Council, the Orissa Swarajists demanded a tangible solution to the problem of floods and relief during the floods.[251]

[244] *Ibid.*
[245] Jagabandhu Singh, 27 August 1925, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XII, pp. 358–59.
[246] Jagabandhu Singh, 18 August 1926, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XIV, p. 135. The nationalists very often used the term "rent" even if they clearly meant land revenue. It was so because there is no separate term for "revenue" in Oriya.
[247] Ram Narayan Mishra, 21 February 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, pp. 418–22.
[248] Jagabandhu Singh, 21 February 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, p. 428.
[249] *Legislative Assembly Debates* (hereafter *LAD*), 1924, Vol. IV, p. 2685.
[250] *Ibid.*, pp. 3887–88.
[251] Godavarish Mishra, 25 August 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. X, p. 292; Jagabandhu Singh, 21 August 1925, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XII, p. 92; Bhubanananda Das, 21 February 1924, *LAD*, Vol. IV, p. 866.

While the Swarajists strongly objected to the government policy of extracting money from the empty pockets of the tenants through heavy taxes, they also vehemently criticized the heavy dependence of the public exchequer on court fees and excise duties. Godavarish Mishra described the proposed 15 per cent contribution of "stamps" to the revenue in 1924–25 as "inducements for litigation" and as "detrimental to peace, progress and prosperity". Likewise, excise was to contribute Rs 17.5 million to the Rs 70 million annual budget. While commenting on the exchequer's dependence on excise and stamps, Mishra said, "No government can be long sustained on such flimsy supports as these vices of man…. Income from the drunkenness of a people is sordid for which our generation will have to be accountable to generations coming after us. Licensed drinking is not unanalogous to licenced robbery or licensed murder".[252]

The Swarajists realized that the main cause of heavy taxes as well as dependence on the income from "drunkenness of people" was "the costliest administration [in the world] of the British government".[253] It was costly because of the "heavy expenditure incurred on police for a generally peaceful and innocent people", they pointed out.[254] To Jagabandhu Singh, the cost was due to more attention being paid to "establishment, contingencies, buildings, conveyances and travelling allowances of the public servants" although the "ease and comfort of the public servants were not the ease and comfort of the public which were the mainstay of the administration".[255] As a way out, Godavarish Mishra demanded in the Provincial Council that all expenditure on buildings for public servants "be based upon economic consideration" and "the government ought not to be so lavish as to spend more on buildings".[256]

[252] *B&O LCP*, 22 February 1924, Vol. IX, pp. 474–75.
[253] Jagabandhu Singh, 21 February 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, pp. 429.
[254] Godavarish Mishra, 22 February 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, p. 476.
[255] *B&O LCP*, 21 February 1924, Vol. IX, p. 430.
[256] *B&O LCP*, 21 August 1924, Vol. X, p. 262.

Their demand for reduction in expenditure on official quarters, and so on, and on the police was accompanied by the demand for more expenditure on education, because the government should not take a very long time "to discover the simple fact that if more was spent on education, less would be required to be spent on heads like police, administration of justice, jails and lastly on general administration".[257] They also drew the government's attention towards the allocation of more funds for road communication, for "easy transport of food stuffs at the time of scarcity was a natural way to combat the unnatural calamities".[258] In the Central Assembly, Bhubanananda demanded 10 million rupees in place of the proposed 5 million rupees in the budget of 1925–26 for the protection of the key industries of India and asked the government not to treat it (that is, protection) like "famine relief".[259]

Civil liberty was another issue that attracted the attention of the Swarajists in the councils. It started with Jagabandhu's demand in the Provincial Council for the release of political prisoners at an early date.[260] Nilakantha echoed this demand in the Central Legislature on 25 March 1924.[261] On 26 January 1926, he also demanded the release of Bengal Ordinance and Regulation III detainees who were languishing in jail for more than one year. Justifying the demand, he said, "the heads of government are still too strong for any violent action or revolution undesirebale to them which will perhaps never disappear so long as this government is foreign in character and depends on pride of power and physical force [sic]".[262]

Nilakantha went beyond the sphere of political prisoners and showed his concern for the ordinary prisoners. While fighting for their civil rights, he demanded that (*a*) the jail manual be made open and ordinary prisoners be allowed to read it, (*b*) the district

[257] Godavarish Mishra, 22 February 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. IX, p. 476.
[258] Jagabandhu Singh, 25 August 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. X, p. 284.
[259] *LAD*, 26 January 1925, Vol. V, p. 247.
[260] *B&O LCP*, 12 February 1924, Vol. IX, p. 40.
[261] *LAD*, Vol. IV, p. 2163.
[262] *LAD*, Vol. VIII, pp. 288–89.

board chairman be empowered to inspect a jail whenever he liked; (*c*) during a visit, the jail staff should not accompany the visitor; (*d*) and the names of the complainants should not be disclosed.[263]

Besides the government, the *math mahant*s were also made the target of attack, and consequently the Hindu Religious Endowment Bill was introduced in the councils to bring the endowed properties under public control. In the Central Assembly, Nilakantha stressed on the urgency of the bill and claimed that such legislation would "put a check" on the expenditure of *mahant*s who spent thousands of rupees "in giving parties to governors" and other high officials. It would also "have some moral influence" and would "create an atmosphere in the country under which the heads of religious and charitable endowments" would find it difficult to behave as they did then.[264] In a similar fashion, Godavarish introduced the Endowment Bill in the B&O Council on 19 August 1926 and again on 16 August 1928.[265]

The No-changers' campaign for prohibition, establishment of *swaraj* panchayats and mass use of *charkha*, which we know as the constructive programme, also found reflection in the Swarajists' speeches and debates in the provincial councils during the period. Godavarish criticized the heavy dependence of public exchequer on excise and stamp duties as "flimsy supports on the vices of man". Expectation from stamp duties was described as "inducements to litigation", which was "detrimental to peace, progress and prosperity" of the nation. He compared "licensed drinking" to "licensed murder" and "licensed robbery".[266] On 17 February 1925, when a resolution was moved in the B&O Council by a Swarajist member from Bihar to prohibit the sale and manufacture of all intoxicants except for medicinal purposes, all Swarajist members from Orissa voted for it, whereas their liberal and zamindar counterparts such as Biswanath Kar and Bhagabat Mahapatra voted against the move.[267] Besides, in the Central Assembly, on 25 March

[263] *LAD*, 25 March 1924, Vol. IV, pp. 2163–64 and 8 March 1925, Vol. IV, p. 1285.
[264] *LAD*, 30 March 1925, Vol. V, p. 496.
[265] *B&O LCP*, Vol. XIV, p. 172 and Vol. XVIII, p. 25.
[266] *B&O LCP*, 22 February 1924, Vol. IX, pp. 474–75.
[267] *B&O LCP*, Vol. XI, p. 665.

1924, Nilakantha strongly demanded the withdrawal of criminal cases filed against the *swaraj* panchayats during the NCM.[268] Condemnation of British courts, defence of *swaraj* panchayats and the like were no small support to the constructive programme of the No-changers. On 19 February 1924, when a resolution with regard to the introduction of the teaching of spinning and training about *charkha*s in schools was moved in the B&O Council by a Swarajist member from Bihar, Godavarish supported the move and pointed out that the decline of local handicrafts could be halted by such measures. If the government and police were not apathetic to the spinning wheel, "it could grow even without imposing high import duty on foreign cloth", he asserted.[269] The Swarajists' concern for the different aspects of contructive work shows that they intended to do within the councils what their No-changer counterparts had been doing outside the councils. Thus, the dichotomy between the Swarajists and the No-changers was perhaps not so very real.

Though the "cooperators", as the Swarajists were known in Orissa, participated in the elections and entered the councils, they were fully aware of its "worthlessness" during the period.[270] Despite "all protests", the excise duty on local salt could not be lessened, nor did the volume of government loan decrease, commented Sashi Bhusan Rath in an editorial in *Asha*.[271] Even Gopabandhu Das could not be released from jail. It was due to such "uselessness" of the councils that the public lost interest in them. However, they also realized that, "cooperation with the government was essential on issues like [development of infrastructure for imparting] education".[272] Hence they advised the non-cooperators "not to mix politics with education".[273] While asking the "non-cooperators" to see reason in "some nationalists' resolve to cooperate with the

[268] *LAD*, 1924, Vol. IV, p. 2163.
[269] *B&O LCP*, 1924, Vol. IX, p. 286.
[270] *Asha*, 26 March 1923.
[271] *Asha*, 23 April 1923.
[272] *Asha*, 17 December 1923.
[273] Biswanath Das spoke in a meeting at the *Satyavadi* School. *Asha*, 28 May 1923.

government", the *Asha* concluded that "it is almost impossible to fight against all odds, i.e., for freedom of the country, as well as for growing independent infrastructural facilities simultaneously".[274] The only alternative course to such a complex situation, where neither any council entry nor any non-cooperation programme would be effective, was "civil disobedience" for which the Congress was "not ready at the moment".[275] Thus, for the Swarajists, the programme of council entry, instead of being an end in itself, was a means to prepare for the forthcoming mass struggle. It is interesting that they even suggested issues for such a mass struggle. As the *Asha* wrote in 1923 that the "forthcoming civil disobedience" movement should be organized only on "the issue of salt".[276]

The Kanpur Congress of 1925 resolved in favour of council entry. This formally united the two groups, the Swarajists and the No-changers, in the Congress and permitted the latter to take part in elections. In Orissa, a few No-changers such as Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Niranjan Patnaik maintained their personal opposition to the councils and decided to restrain from contesting the ensuing elections of November 1926.[277] Gopabandhu Das was reported to have joined the Independent Congress Party of M.M. Malaviya and expressed his desire to contest elections, but ultimately distanced himself from all elections. On the other hand, the UPCC as a body endorsed the Kanpur resolution and constituted a committee consisting of Harekrishna Mahatab, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Niranjan Patnaik, Jadumani Mangaraj and Bhagirathi Mahapatra to select candidates for the election, in a meeting at Cuttack in early February 1926.[278] Accordingly, Jadumani Mangaraj appealed in the press to the aspiring candidates to send their applications.[279]

[274] *Asha*, 26 February 1923.
[275] *Asha*, 23 April 1923.
[276] *Ibid.*
[277] *Searchlight*, 1 June 1926.
[278] *Asha*, 22 February 1926.
[279] *Asha*, 12 April 1926.

In April 1926, another meeting was held to finalize the election strategy as well as to select candidates.[280] Long before the elections, the list of Congress candidates was released to the press. The candidates were:

Central Legislative Assembly:

1. Nilakantha Das Choudhury
   (Not Nilakantha Das)
2. Bhikari Charan Patnaik

Bihar and Orissa Council:

1.	North Cuttack	:	Narayan Birabar Samant
2.	South Cuttack	:	Nabakrishna Choudhury
3.	North Puri	:	Godavarish Mishra
4.	South Puri	:	Lingaraj Mishra
5.	North Balasore	:	Nanda Kishore Das
6.	South Balasore	:	Harekrishna Mahatab
7.	Orissa Municipality	:	Jadumani Mangaraj
8.	Orissa Zamindar	:	Jagannath Das (of Bhadrak)

Madras Presidency Council:

1.	Ganjam	:	Biswanath Das
2.	Ganjam	:	Sashi Bhusan Rath [281]

However, as the list excluded many prominent former Swarajists, many Congressmen were critical of it. They questioned the non-inclusion of Madhusudan Das, Nilakantha Das, Jagabandhu Singh and Ram Narayan Mishra. They also criticized the UPCC for not selecting any candidate either for Sambalpur or for Singhbhum. Even Harekrishna Mahatab's selection as a candidate was not acceptable to these critics.[282] This necessitated certain changes in the list. Finally, the candidates were as follows:

[280] *UD*, 24 April 1926.
[281] *Asha*, 14 June 1926.
[282] *Ibid.*

Central Legislative Assembly:

1. Nilakantha Das
2. Bhubanananda Das (Independent Congress Party candidate supported by the Congress)

Bihar and Orissa Council:

1. Municipality	:	Jadumani Mangaraj
2. North Cuttack	:	Narayan Birabar Samant
3. South Cuttack	:	Nabakrishna Choudhury
4. North Puri	:	Godavarish Mishra
5. South Puri	:	Lingaraj Mishra
6. North Balasore	:	Harekrishna Mahatab
7. South Balasore	:	Nanda Kishore Das

Madras Presidency Council:

1. Ganjam	:	(a) Biswanath Das
		(b) Sashi Bhusan Rath[283]

In order to coordinate the campaign as well as to regulate the activities of the Congress council members after the elections, the UPCC formed an election committee. Voters' committees were also constituted at various levels. The party candidates signed a pledge for submitting a quarterly report of their activities and for contributing a part of their salary, after the election, to the party. Accordingly, while the council members were to give Rs 10, the Central Assembly members' contributions was fixed at Rs 20 per month.[284]

In the election, except Nabakrishna Choudhury, whose candidature was rejected on the grounds of his being underage, and Jadumani Mangaraj, all other Congress candidates won. For Sambalpur and Singhbhum, the UPCC did not have official candidates. After the election, both the No-changers like Mahatab and Nanda Kishore Das, and Pro-changers of yesteryears like Godavarish Mishra and Nilakantha Das entered the councils and the Assembly. Now the issues taken up and the efforts made in the councils were quite similar to those taken earlier by the Swarajists during 1923–26.

[283] *Searchlight*, 20 October and 12 November 1926; *UD*, 4 September 1926.
[284] *UD*, 4 September 1926.

While commenting on the budget of 1927–28, Mahatab said in the B&O Provincial Council that it displayed no sympathy for those millions who were to pay taxes only to provide ever-increasing salaries to the highly-paid officers without any hope of getting anything in return except the apprehension of fresh taxation. "The budget did not disclose any sense of responsibility towards those with whose money the government was to administer the province", he said.[285] Lingaraj Mishra noted that the police budget surpassed the education budget.[286] On 21 February 1927, he also demanded the free manufacture of salt, at least for private consumption, in coastal Orissa.[287] On 14 February 1927, Nanda Kishore Das asked for the closure of liquor shops opened by the side of the Puri Jagannath Temple and Lingaraj Mishra suggested that the Royal Commission on Agriculture be asked to advise on some new and improved methods of agriculture in Orissa for augmenting agricultural production.[288] In 1927, Mahatab renewed the demand for Permanent Settlement in the state. He objected to the unnecessary expenditure on settlement operations that led to increase in revenue "without any corresponding benefit" to the tenants. He categorically declared that the government did not have any right to demand more money from the people when it was "unwilling to spend equally for their benefit".[289]

Likewise, the demand for the suspension of the settlement operation was repeatedly made in 1927 and 1928. Nanda Kishore demanded it on the grounds that the settlement purposefully sowed "seeds of litigation" among the ryots which the civil court would take "some years to decide".[290] In 1928, Godavarish remarked, "They [settlement operations] are so exacting upon the people and so harassing that really no one will be said to have any wisdom if he holds that settlement operations are a necessity in the country".[291]

[285] *B&O LCP*, 24 February 1927, Vol. XV, p. 509.
[286] *Ibid.*, p. 500.
[287] *Ibid.*, p. 306.
[288] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[289] *B&O LCP*, 24 February 1927, Vol. XV, p. 512.
[290] *B&O LCP*, 5 March 1927, Vol. XV, p. 726.
[291] *B&O LCP*, 9 March 1928, Vol. XVIII, p. 438.

The chronic problem of floods was another important issue that caught the attention of the nationalists. Like their counterparts in the previous council, they highlighted the problem and sought a permanent solution to it. When fresh floods occurred in the coastal areas of Orissa in August 1927, Narayan Birabar Samant demanded emergency relief in the Provincial Council[292] and Mahatab, pointing out that more than 60 per cent houses had been damaged in Balasore and Cuttack districts, demanded that an enquiry committee be set up by the government to ascertain the actual losses.[293] Though they demanded relief, the nationalists felt that the government did not want "to mitigate the floods" in the state and "held out a hope" which was very "doubtful".[294]

In 1927, a demand for the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts, a major concern of the nationalists since the beginning of the century, was made both in the Assembly as well as in the Provincial Council. On 1 February 1927, Nilakantha Das raised the issue in the Central Assembly.[295] He put forward a resolution demanding "a separate Orissa Province" like that of "Assam and Central Provinces".[296] After a week, Godavarish Mishra echoed the demand in the B&O Council. He said, "I would not use a word demand, for if the Oriyas demanded it, they would have got it. It is so natural and so legitimate, I would use a more appropriate and acceptable word "desire".[297] On 27 March 1929, Nilakantha reiterated the demand in the Central Assembly.[298]

In 1927, the demand for the revival of the local salt industry was renewed in the Provincial Council. Mahatab put forward the demand on 2 September 1927,[299] while Nilakantha pointed accusingly at the government in the Central Assembly for "bringing about famine, scarcity and homelessness in those tracts" (of coastal Orissa) where

[292] *B&O LCP*, 29 August 1927, Vol. XVI, p. 25.
[293] *B&O LCP*, 30 August 1927, Vol. XVI, p. 176.
[294] Mahatab, 7 March 1927; *B&O LCP*, Vol. XV, p. 814.
[295] *LAD*, 1927, Vol. IX, p. 355.
[296] *Ibid.*, 8 February 1927, pp. 546–47, 550.
[297] *B&O LCP*, 30 August 1927, Vol. XVI, p. 175.
[298] *LAD*, 1929, Vols 1–3, p. 2411.
[299] *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVI, p. 374.

salt was "practically the only means of livelihood…". He further said, "the government is very careful about its revenue and its monopoly", but "the consideration of the happiness and well being of the people should be the first primary consideration", while pressing for the revival of the local salt industry.[300] Bhubanananda Das supported him on the issue.[301]

Control of the finances and the administration of key industries like railways by foreigners worried the legislators very much. While commenting on the railway budget of 1929, Nilakantha observed that "the railways ought to be a national industry", but there was nothing national in its administration. He warned his comments "would be losing their constructive character … so long as the industry does not become at least Indian in spirit as well as in form".[302]

The nationalists' speeches and criticism of the government in the councils were not in lieu of mass action. When other conditions were favourable, both council work and mass actions were pursued by the same set of nationalist leaders. This was evident from their protest in the Provincial Council against land revenue hike in Khurda in early 1928,[303] which was preceded by efforts at mobilization of the local ryots there for a *satyagraha* on the Bardoli model.[304]

In 1928–29, the general political atmosphere was once again surcharged with a strong anti-colonial feeling. The Congress' decision in the latter part of 1927 to boycott the Simon Commission, followed by anti-Simon demonstrations in various parts of the country, fed the strong anti-government feeling. Once a congenial atmosphere was built up for mass action, the Congress legislators realized the redundance of the councils. Accordingly, by May 1928, Lingaraj Mishra in the B&O Council and Nilakantha Das backed by Bhubanananda Das in the Central Assembly proposed to resign

[300] *LAD*, 14 March 1927, Vol. IX, pp. 2190–91.
[301] *Ibid.*
[302] *LAD*, 21 February 1929, Vol. XI, p. 1060.
[303] Lingaraj Mishra, 21 February 1928, and Godavarish Mishra, 9 March 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 291, 430–46.
[304] *Ibid.*, pp. 443–44; Details in the following chapter.

on the Simon issue.[305] When the Lahore Congress of 1929 called upon all members of the legislatures to resign their seats, Harekrishna Mahatab as the UPCC secretary instructed the Orissa members to abide by the decision and consequently all members resigned in the beginning of 1930.[306] The Congress legislators' proposal to resign in mid-1928 and their subsequent resignation in 1930 with no apparent resentment (against resignation) in the public forums like the local press indicated their preference for mass action to supposedly easy council work.

The speeches and the issues raised within the councils were reproduced and highlighted in the nationalist press. For example, for reducing wasteful expenditure in administration, in 1923, the *Sadhana* suggested abolishing the highly-paid executive posts given to the Europeans and instead appointing qualified Indians there.[307] The *Puribasi* in 1924 made a comparison between the salaries of ministers in Japan and those in India, and argued that the Indian ministers had no right to draw higher salaries than their counterparts in Japan.[308] In 1925, the *UD* also compared the salaries of ministers in the United States with those in India and lamented that ministers in India got a higher salary than their American counterparts.[309]

The newspapers were equally critical of high land revenue and settlement operations and were one in demanding Permanent Settlement so as to minimize the damage to standing crops due to frequent settlement operations. The *Samaj* wrote about the plight of peasants due to settlement operations in Balasore in 1925.[310] Referring to the hike in revenue demand, the *Sadhana* wrote that the *praja* (peasant) was born to part with everything that it

[305] *UD*, 5 May 1928; Initially, Nilakantha Das was reluctant to resign. But the party workers pointedly asked him to resign either from the Assembly, or from the Congress. Ultimately Nilakantha succumbed to the pressure and resigned. *Asha*, 8 July 1929.
[306] *UD*, 18 January 1930.
[307] *Sadhana*, 15 January 1923.
[308] *Puribasi*, 18 March 1924.
[309] *UD*, 20 June 1925.
[310] *Samaj*,17 January 1925.

earned.[311] In 1925, the *UD* doubted whether revenue settlement was in the interest of the tenants or of the officials.[312]

The support for the Congress legislators' demands also came from leaders like Gopabandhu Das, who was personally opposed to any council entry programme. Though generally critical of the council activities,[313] Gopabandhu, in an editorial, explained the issue of Indianization of services in railways raised by Nilakantha Das in the Assembly and concluded that it was a just demand by the member.[314]

The council activities and speeches were reported at length in the nationalist press during the period. Press coverage provided further sanction and encouragement to the Congress legislators' moves in the councils. Together they created an image of a substantial movement at a time when the tide of mass action was at a low pitch.

II.b

Between 1923 and 1926, whereas the Swarajists participated in the council elections and concentrated on council work, the non-Swarajists or No-changers, better known as the *asahayogi*s (non-cooperators), emphasized on Gandhian constructive work, as pointed out earlier. They also participated in the elections to the different local-self boards and some of them became members of various district and local boards. This section would attempt to focus on the No-changers' activities during the period.

II.b.i

Promotion of *khadi* was one of the major preoccupations of the No-changers throughout the period. This included the sale, production and popularization of *khadi* and cultivation of cotton at a few selected places. The *Utkal Khadi Board*, formed as a branch

[311] *Sadhana*, 9 April 1923.
[312] *UD*, 10 January 1925.
[313] *Samaj*, 28 March 1928, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol.VI, pp. 397–400.
[314] *Samaj*, 12 March 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol.VI, p. 377.

of the AIKB in 1923, supervised the *khadi* work. Niranjan Patnaik, a staunch No-changer acted as its chairman. Patnaik wrote some booklets on *khadi*, which seemed to give guidelines for the *khadi* campaign in Orissa.[315]

In 1923, when the Provincial Congress was yet to overcome the setback it had suffered due to the decline in the NCM and the consequent rift within the party, the No-changers made sincere appeals to all Congressmen, including the cooperators, to concentrate on the *khadi* campaign. While Niranjan Patnaik made such an appeal in the press,[316] Jaymangal Rath argued that since the council entry programme would adversely affect the *khadi* and other Gandhian constructive works, the Congressmen needed to give all their time to the latter.[317] On the other hand, the Pro-changers strongly believed that, between the two, the former would be able to create a momentum for the Congress, which was passing through a deep sense of passivity.[318] Thus, *khadi* instead of becoming a common programme for all Congressmen, by and large remained only a No-changers' concern. This probably adversely affected the campaign, which despite being funded by the AIKB did not progress much for some time. Gopabandhu Das, after his release from jail in June 1924, observed that only four centres for production and four centres for sale of *khadi* were functional in Orissa.[319]

One major problem in the *khadi* campaign was paucity of local yarn. The *Utkal Khadi Board* spent a major portion of its funds in purchasing yarn from neighbouring Andhra. To overcome the problem, the board encouraged cultivation of cotton in Orissa. There were also writings in the press on how the cultivation of cotton, neglected so far in the state could change the fate of the people.[320] In places like Ganjam, the *khadi* workers visited the fields for supervising the cultivation process. A few workers had been

[315] *UD*, 10 November 1923.
[316] *Ibid.*
[317] *Asha*, 23 July 1923.
[318] *Asha*, 24 December 1923.
[319] *Samaj*, 19 July 1924, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol.VI, p. 328.
[320] *Asha*, 13 July 1925.

employed to help in the processing of yarn. A worker had been trained at Ahmadabad for the purpose.[321]

From mid-1924, *khadi* work became a little streamlined. The UPCC, which met after the annual conference at Cuttack on 30 June 1924, decided to close some loss-making *khadi* centres and to concentrate on a few selected centres.[322] Consequently, a few centres like those in Bhadrak, Guji Darada and Sora Jodi were closed by mid-1925.[323] In principle, however, plans were made to open *khadi* centres in every district and sale counters at every district as well as in all sub-divisional Congress offices.[324]

In January 1925, the UPCC, which worked as the parent organization of the *Utkal Khadi Board*, planned to set up a training school for *khadi* workers at an annual expense of Rs 2,500. Initially planned for one year, the school would train five batches of volunteers for a duration of two months per batch. The trainees, each one of whom was to be given a monthly stipend of Rs 7, would be required to work for the Khadi Board for at least two years after the completion of their training for a monthly salary of Rs 20. The scheme, finalized by Govind Mishra, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Gopabandhu Das, proposed to begin the school at Berhampur.[325]

Gandhi, during his short visit to Cuttack on 19 August 1925, said that *khadi* could play a very major role in alleviating poverty in the country.[326] Soon after Gandhi's visit, probably on his suggestion, the commission rule for sale of *khadi* was relaxed from 23 August 1925. Henceforth, the 2 per cent commission, given for sales above Rs 5,000 a month, would be available to all hawkers and shopkeepers on sales above Rs 1,000 a month.[327] By the end of 1925, all the four DCCs (Ganjam, Puri, Cuttack and Balasore) had *khadi* centres which sold *khadi* yarns, clothes and the *charkha*.

[321] *Samaj*, 28 April 1923.
[322] *Searchlight*, 9 July 1924.
[323] *UD*, 6 June 1925.
[324] *Samaj*, 19 July 1924, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 329–30.
[325] *Samaj*, 24 January 1925.
[326] *Asha*, 24 August 1925.
[327] *UD*, 19 September 1925.

The *Utkal Khadi Bhandar* was the nodal agency for all these centres.[328]

From 18 February–18 March 1924, the UPCC planned to observe "Gandhi's Arrest Anniversary Day" in the state. During this period, elaborate arrangements were made to promote the sale of *khadi*. Some of the measures the *Utkal Khadi Board* wished to take up were as follows:

1. An appeal would be made to the vernacular press to write extensively on the utility of *khadi*.
2. The local leaders would sell *khadi* in the marketplace.
3. Women as well as school children would be mobilized to wear *khadi*.
4. *Khadi mela*s would be organized for the promotion of *khadi* at various places.[329]

Though the actual outcome of this particular celebration is not known, the local press reported about a few other celebrations like the "*khadi* week" and the "*satyagraha* week" from 6–13 April 1926 when the leaders took to hawking *khadi* and spoke about the utility of *khadi* in street meetings organized for the purpose. Such *khadi* sale and meetings were held at Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri, Jajpur and Ganjam. The leaders who participated in these meetings included Pranakrishna Padhiary, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Babaji Ram Das, Reba Roy, Narasingha Chyau Patnaik, Gopabandhu Das and Banamali Das.[330]

Iswar Sahu, who described the *charkha* as the *kamdhenu* of the poor, reported how *khadi* production had increased in Orissa since April 1925. The statistics given by him were as follows:

> In April 1925 the total quantity of *khadi* produced was 30 *seer*s. In May 1925 it was 39 *seers*. A month later it had risen to four *mon* [a *mon* is approximately 40 *seer*s] and 39 *seers* and by March 1926 it increased to 37 *mon* and 30 *seer*s.[331]

[328] *Asha*, 7 December 1925.
[329] *Asha*, 3 March 1924.
[330] *UD*, 6 September 1926.
[331] *Asha*, 12 April 1926.

The rise in the volume of *khadi* production was also evident when a spinning qualification was prescribed for all UPCC, DCC and sub-Divisional Congress Committee members. In August 1924, the total number of Congress members fulfilling the prescribed quota (spinning of 2,000 metres of yarn in a month) was only 34 with no response from Sambalpur and Singhbhum because of their strained relations with the UPCC. The district-wise break-up was as follows:[332]

Table 3.1: District-wise Break-up of Congress Members Fulfilling the Spinning Quota in August 1924

District	*Total No. of Members*	*No. of Qualified Members*
Balasore	125	13
Puri	109	2
Ganjam	80	15
Cuttack	59	4
Total	**373**	**34**

However, the number increased to 103 by the end of September 1924[333] and rose further to 146 by March 1925.[334] Though it was not a satisfactory figure compared to Bihar, where the total number of qualified Congress members crossed 979 by March 1925, this reflected a gradual rise in the popularity of *khadi* at least among the responsible workers of the Congress.[335]

In 1928 and 1929, when the Congress was on the rise once again, *khadi* got a further boost in the state. If boycott meant bonfire of foreign clothes, *swadeshi* became largely synonymous with the promotion of *khadi*. In April 1929, the *Asha* wrote, "Everyday there are orders [for *khadi*] from the different districts and the *gadjat*s; every week more and more number of school and college students are seen using *khadi*; new sale centres, both on individual and cooperative basis are opened. If the trend continues like this the

[332] *UD*, 6 September 1925.
[333] *UD*, 27 September 1925.
[334] *Searchlight*, 8 April 1925.
[335] *Ibid.*

situation may greatly change just in another two months time".[336] This showed how *khadi* as an item of the Gandhian constructive programme prepared the base for the forthcoming civil disobedience agitation in Orissa.

II.b.ii

Gandhian constructive work also included village reconstruction which the No-changers enthusiastically took up during the period. Village reconstruction meant the spreading out of Congress workers into the countryside and educating the villagers on various health, hygiene and social issues like prohibition and untouchability and the like. The Congress *ashram*s set up in villages like Jagatsinghpur, Chandpur and Bhandari Pokhari were devoted to such works. At Jagatsinghpur, Gopabandhu Choudhury and Pranakrishna Padhiary worked as health workers when malaria and cholera broke out in 1923–24. In the process they had been consistently campaigning against superstitions with regard to these diseases.[337] A.B. Acharya, who had studied Ayurveda, started one *Swaraj Oushadhalay* at Cuttack during the period. He visited the patients in the nearby villages without charging any fee, as claimed by an advertisement in the local nationalist press. Practicing medicine and undertaking political campaigns in the rural areas were complementary to each other in his case.[338] This was also true of Laxmi Narayan Sahu who practiced homeopathy as a means for making entry into the countryside in Choudwar (Cuttack district) for the purpose of village reconstruction in 1927.[339]

Jaymangal Rath, a prominent Congressmen from Ganjam, was completely devoted to village reconstruction. For this he believed that the village *Bhagabat Tungi*, a kind of community centre with the status of a sacred place in the village society, could be of great use. He proposed that Congressmen should integrate with the *tungi*

[336] *Asha*, 15 April 1929.
[337] Mohanti, *Dhuli Matir Santha*, p. 66.
[338] *Asha*, 16 March 1925.
[339] Laxmi Narayan Sahu, *Mo Barabula Jiban* (autobiography), Cuttack, 1968 (Reprint in 1990), p. 94.

and lead the social reform programmes.[340] As an activist, he organized such a *tungi* at Sorada village in Ganjam in January 1925. Numerically dominated by the fishermen who were "very backward" and illiterate, the *tungi* was headed by a local youth called Antaryami Behera. The *tungi* mobilized community labour and village funds to arrange streetlights and to construct a metalled approach road to the village. As a part of the political campaign, the committee also resolved to spin 20,000 metres of yarn per month for which the *Utkal Khadi Board* agreed to supply cotton. As claimed by Rath, minimizing the marriage expenditure and starting a primary school for girl students from February 1925 were two other important achievements of the committee. Since the fisherwomen were generally seen as objects of sexual exploitation, as a remedy the Congressmen through the village committee advised them to keep aloof from "new fashions". As a part of the linguistic movement, the local people who were not much aware about their linguistic identities were also "educated" to declare themselves as Oriya-speaking.[341]

The village reconstruction programme, which was both social and political in nature, had a similar outcome at Joranda near Angul. In January 1925, the *swaraj* panchayat was revived there on the occasion of Gopabandhu's visit. The panchayat reportedly resolved to put an end to gambling in the village. To implement it, the playing cards used for gambling were collected and set on fire, which was a reminder of the bonfire during the non-cooperation days. For ensuring total prohibition, the panchayat closed not only the liquor shops, but also the betel shops, reported the Congressmen through the nationalist press.[342]

As an organization, the UPCC also took up a few measures for village reconstruction. This was possible because of the predominance of the No-changers there during the period. Often they organized party meetings in small towns and villages so that the issue of village reconstruction could be well focused. Thus, the

[340] *Asha*, 12 March 1923.
[341] *Samaj*, 24 January 1925.
[342] *Samaj*, 7 February 1925.

Balasore DCC held its annual conference at Soro, a small town in the district, on 5 and 6 April 1925, and the Utkal Provincial Conference was held at Bolgarh, a village in the Puri district, on 14 and 15 November 1925. The Balasore conference resolved to form at least one *Palli Samiti* (village council) in a cluster of every five villages in the district. The main objectives of the *samiti*, as discussed in the meeting, were to look into:

1. The development of primary education.
2. The prevention of tropical diseases like malaria and cholera, etc.
3. The popularization of the *charkha* and spinning.
4. The eradication of untouchability.
5. Campaigning for prohibition in the villages.[343]

In late 1925, it was also decided to start a training centre for the purpose. Set on an *ashram* model in a village, the centre would bring out a magazine on a regular basis to carry forward the programme of village reconstruction. It planned to train 35 cadres at a time, who, beside other things, would provide security and social service to the village community at the time of exigencies. Bhagirathi Mahapatra had been assigned the responsibility to organize the training centre, the UPCC press release stated.[344]

In the No-changers' perception, village reconstruction was not limited to mere amelioration of the rural people or of the society there. It was a broader issue that was the basis of the national movement against the British. "If the villages had been kept in good health under the British rule, there was no need of any freedom struggle in the country", Gopabandhu Das argued in his presidential address at the Soro session of the Balasore Conference in 1925.[345] It was also a programme which "aimed at familiarizing" the urban people "with the conditions of villages and of people there".[346] To

[343] *Asha*, 20 April 1925.
[344] *UD*, 31 October 1925.
[345] *Asha*, 20 April 1925.
[346] Dukshishyam Das, Secretary of the Bolgarh Conference Organizing Committee, quoted in the *UD*, 24 October 1925.

Gopabandhu, this (village reconstruction programme) was one such programme which could not only unite the country, but also the different sections of the Congress. Both the council politics as well as the Gandhian constructive work had to have their base in the countryside, the mainstay of the nation, for which integration with the villages was essential. As Gopabandhu argued, India's main problem was the increasing gap between the city and the country. It had been partially bridged during the NCM. To bridge it further, henceforth, the city needed to come to the country and the village reconstruction programme was an opportunity for that, he emphasized at the Bolgarh Conference.[347] In fact "Bolgarh", though very small, was an attempt in that direction.

II.b.iii

Floods being a chronic problem of Orissa, providing relief to the affected people became a major preoccupation of the nationalists throughout the early twentieth century. During the period under study, when Gandhian constructive work was the main agenda, the No-changers' involvement in flood relief needs a mention.[348]

In 1924, the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore faced severe drought. But due to lack of organization, the UPCC could not be involved in any relief work.[349] In 1925, however, the situation changed and when fresh floods swelled in July and August,[350] the Congress relief activities began immediately. Gopabandhu Das reported that, alongwith Jagannath Mishra and Ghanashyam Kanungo, two party workers from Puri, he visited 66 villages in a country boat and distributed relief there between 23 and 28 July 1925.

[347] *Samaj*, 24 November 1925.

[348] In fact, the floods (and drought) issue had many dimensions.There were agitations with demands for adequate relief and permanent solution both within the councils (and Assembly) as well as outside it. There was also sharp criticism of the colonial state by the nationalists for its failure as a relief provider. Due to the nationalists' intervention, providing remedy to the people affected by a supposedly natural calamity became a state concen, in popular parlance. The agitation within the councils has been dealt with earlier and the agitation outside the councils will be discussed later.

[349] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 1 August 1925, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 149.

[350] *Ibid.*, pp. 145–49.

He mentioned the names of the villages and described the activities his team conducted there. The quantity of relief material was meagre, "but more than the quantity it was fellow feeling, at the time of their [people's] sufferings, which was of great significance", he wrote in the *Samaj*.[351] This explains the nationalists' understanding of the human dimension of relief which could not be comprehended through the stereotyped logic of "political mileage" or of "political mobilization". Other prominent No-changers such as Harekrishna Mahatab in Balasore, Govind Mishra in Jajpur and Kendrapada and Bhagirathi Mahapatra in Cuttack district organized flood relief camps at different points of time.[352] At Bolgarh, the provincial conference resolved to form a committee to coordinate the relief activities.[353]

The relief issue was inseparable from the question of human dignity. Relief from outside Orissa was not readily accepted lest it might be reduced to mendicancy. In July 1925, the flood relief committee of the Congress asked Acharya Harihar Das to report whether an appeal should be made for outside help.[354] Till then only appeals would be made for internal help, the committee decided. Accordingly, Gopabandhu Das, on behalf of the relief committee (of the Congress) appealed to the people of Orissa to help their brothers in distress. He lamented the lack of coordination work, otherwise relief would have been far more effective. "In our considered opinion it is not good to appeal to people outside Orissa for relief. The work should begin with the relief materials collected from within Orissa. According to need, appeals outside Orissa can be made later on", Gopabandhu said very firmly.[355] When Harihar Das reported in the affirmative, appeals were made for outside help.[356] Gopabandhu considered floods, which might lead to famine, to be such a grave problem that he believed the issues of *Swaraj* or

[351] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 13 August 1927, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, pp. 206–41.
[352] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 27 August 1926, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 206.
[353] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.
[354] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 1 August 1925, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 150.
[355] *Ibid.*
[356] *Searchlight*, 13 January 1926.

"Orissa Union" to be secondary. "All these political movements could wait. Would the country survive [in the face of such grave danger]? Think of the survival of the people. Orissa could be a union only if the Oriya community survives. It could enjoy *Swaraj*, only if the people lived. The [Orissa] nation is going to perish. Let all of us come out and rise to the occasion", he wrote in 1925.[357]

In 1927, when there were floods in the Baitarani River that affected both the Cuttack and Balasore districts, the nationalist-led "Flood Relief Committee organized relief there". The *Asha* reported that 12 relief centres and more than 40 volunteers had been working in places like Bhadrak, Anandpur, Tihidi, Dhamnagar, Dhusuri and Charbatia. The relief workers either constructed or repaired the houses destroyed during the floods.[358]

When the *Young Utkal*, now brought out by a former Swarajist leader Bhubanananda Das, questioned Gopabandhu's integrity as a relief worker and published some news items to tarnish his image, the *Asha* defended Gopabandhu for his sincere work and criticized the former for its "meanness".[359] There were letters from some 50 ryots from Ali village in the Cuttack district, saying how they were saved during the floods due to Gopabandhu's relief efforts.[360] Gopabandhu felt so hurt because of such baseless allegations that he refused to accept any public position and "decided to confine" himself to the "solitary cells of *Satyavadi* in future".[361] This also demonstrated how squabbling and factionalism had affected the constructive programme during the period.

II.b.iv

The No-changers participated in the district board elections of 1924 and consequently captured the Cuttack, Puri and Balasore boards. In Cuttack, out of 30, the Congress members won 17 seats. Among

[357] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 22 August 1925, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 156.
[358] *Asha*, 14 May 1928.
[359] *Asha*, 13 February 1928.
[360] *Asha*, 12 March 1928.
[361] *Asha*, 5 March 1928.

the elected (Congress) members, five were former teachers of different national schools. In Puri, out of 21, the Congress won 15 seats. The winners included six full-time Congress workers of the non-cooperation days, three teachers and four former students of the *Satyavadi* school. In the Balasore District Board, out of 21 elected members, the party had 15 members.[362] Gopabandhu Choudhury in Cuttack, Harekrishna Mahatab in Balasore and Banamali Das in Puri became the chairmen of the boards.[363] The Local Self-Government Act did not apply to Sambalpur and Ganjam. Hence, there were no board elections there. Among the local boards, Bhadrak came under Congress control and Banchhanidhi Mohanty, a strong No-changer became its chairman.

The list of the Congress members of the different boards shows that besides the No-changers, Swarajists also participated in the board elections. Prominent among the Swarajist members who participated in board elections were Birkishor Das in Cuttack and Kripasindhu Mishra, Jagabandhu Singh, Lingaraj Mishra and Godavarish Mishra in Puri.[364] The district boards became another meeting ground for both the Swarajists and the No-changers.

Soon after the elections, Mahatab, as the Balasore chairman, was reported to have issued instructions to the board employees to use *khadi* as their uniform.[365] In early 1925, the Cuttack chairman instructed the teachers of board-controlled primary schools to wear *khadi* and to integrate vocational training on the *charkha* in the school curriculum.[366] In April 1925, the Cuttack Board, under the chairmanship of Gopabandhu Choudhury, resolved (*a*) to open eight primary schools in the year, (*b*) to supply *charkha*s as well as books free of cost to the "low" caste children in the school, (*c*) to give scholarship to students showing interest in spinning and carpentry, (*d*) to organize spinning competitions in schools and (*e*) to undertake the construction of an approach road between Balikuda and Ersama

[362] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, *Home Poll*.
[363] *UD*, 19 July 1924.
[364] Government reply to members' question, 19 August 1924, *B&O LCP*, Vol. X, p. 17.
[365] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, September, *Home Poll*.
[366] FRBO, File No. 112 of 1925, February, *Home Poll*.

in the district.[367] All these reflect the efforts of the Congress members to implement the Gandhian constructive programme through the district boards.

Another noteworthy achievement was the reception given to Gopabandhu Das by the Bhadrak local board on 2 December 1924.[368] For the first time, a non-official was officially received. In his response, Gopabandhu asked the different Congress dominated boards to (*a*) use their mother tongue in place of English as the official language, (*b*) be vigilant about the misuse of public funds, lest the official claim that Congressmen were incapable of managing their own economy be proved right, (*c*) be extra careful regarding the problems of health, sanitation, transport and education of the villages, (*d*) to introduce the *charkha* in the primary schools and to popularize *khadi* during the official tours of members to various parts of the district, (*e*) properly utilize the fund for primary education and to revive the *chatsali*s or the traditional system of education known for its low-cost establishment, to achieve mass education, and (*f*) to be careful in their personal behaviour and approach because the board members must be accountable and responsible to the people and should be different from the British officials.[369] These suggestions became the guidelines for the Congress members in the various boards.

One major problem the boards faced was paucity of funds. In September 1925, when malaria broke out in Cuttack, the chairman did not even have sufficient funds to purchase quinine for mass supply.[370] Another problem was that of limited power. Even in July 1924, when all preparations had been made to participate in the board elections (the Cuttack Board election had been already held), a section of the No-changers, comprising top leaders like Gopabandhu Das and Niranjan Patnaik, objected to the Congress' participation because of such limited powers.[371] In a press statement,

[367] *UD*, 13 June 1925.
[368] *Searchlight*, 7 December 1924.
[369] Gopabandhu in *Samaj*, 6 December 1925, quoted in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 332–37.
[370] *UD*, 5 September 1925.
[371] *Searchlight*, 17 August 1924; *UD*, 19 July 1924.

Niranjan Patnaik pointed out that the Congress would not gain much from participation in the boards as far as the constructive programme was concerned. The board experience would be a waste of energy for the Congress which had a very limited stock of workers and thereby of energy, he warned.[372]

The apathy towards the boards increased further in the years to come. After the completion of the first term, even Gopabandhu Choudhury, chairman of the Cuttack Board, was engulfed in it in 1926. He questioned the efficacy of such activities and appealed to the Congress to rethink on the issue of participation in the boards. He suggested that instead of deciding themselves, the Congress members should enquire from the people whether to participate in the board activities or not. When the party did not have enough workers, so much time and energy should not be wasted, he believed.[373]

In 1926–27, despite the objections raised by one section of the leadership, the UPCC decided to participate in the district board elections. The election for the Cuttack Board was held in early December 1926. The party candidates, including Gopabandhu Choudhury, lost in many places. The Congress was reduced to a minority.[374] The scene in Cuttack was repeated in Puri board elections which were held in May 1927. There the Congress won only nine seats and lost 12 to its opponents.[375] In the Khurda local board too the Congress contested all eight seats but won only two.[376]

The causes of such defeat were not hard to identify. In Cuttack, the defeat was due to large-scale use of money power by the opponents during the election. According to the Congressmen, the non-Congress candidates, locally called the Kanika Party (the Kanika prince was the main rival to the Congress and led the opposition to the UPCC) purchased votes at the rate of Rs 1–10.[377]

[372] *Ibid.*
[373] *UD*, 14 August 1926.
[374] *UD*, 18 December 1926.
[375] *UD*, 4 June 1927.
[376] *Ibid.*
[377] *UD*, 11 December 1926.

Another reason was that a significant section of the leadership lacked interest in the board elections. Bhagirathi Mahapatra, who personally objected to participate in the elections, was given the responsibility of coordinating the election campaign. He made little effort to select good candidates and seldom campaigned himself.[378] Besides, as the *UD* observed, intense factionalism in the party ranks was a major cause of the defeat, especially in Cuttack. On many occasions, the Congress candidates campaigned against each other and contributed to each others' defeat.[379]

Over the period of three years, many Congress leaders had become unpopular. The educated section in the urban areas could probably perceive this first. This was reflected in the council elections of 1926 that preceded the district board elections. In the council elections, all Congress candidates except the ones from the urban constituency won their seats.[380] Intense factionalism, charges of graft and the like, which prevailed during the period, affected the election prospects of many Congress candidates. The result was a decline in sympathy for the party in the urban areas.

The nationalist leadership, however, sensed the mood of the people and forged unity among themselves. This was displayed at Balasore, where the district board elections were to be held in the latter part of June 1927. Nearly all provincial leaders campaigned there. This bore results. The Congress secured 13 out of 21 seats in the board.[381] Though the victory was not spectacular compared to that in 1923, when the party had secured a two-thirds majority, the Congress was able to salvage its image.

During the post-1926 period, the Congress' activities in the board were oppositional in nature. The members who were in minority, except in Balasore, criticized the anti-Congress stance of the board. The nationalist press stood by them in this mission. Thus, the *goshala* started by the Congress-led board earlier was disbanded and the cows sold "illegally" to the members at a throwaway price,

[378] *UD*, 11 June 1927.
[379] *UD*, 29 May 1927.
[380] *UD*, 11 December 1926.
[381] *UD*, 25 June 1927.

wrote the *Asha*.[382] It was also highlighted that the Kanika prince, who symbolized the anti-Congress forces, filed cases in the court for filling up the public ponds dug by the previous Congress board in Balasore. The case was, however, dismissed and this was described as a great humiliation for the prince.[383] The *Asha* had a kind of celebration when the chairman of the Cuttack District Board, Srikrishna Mahapatra, the main ally of the Kanika prince, was impeached in March 1928.[384]

In Balasore, Mahatab as the district board chairman was isolated and cornered by the officials and his opponents. He was arrested in June in 1928 on a "false" charge of misappropriaton of board funds.[385] Earlier, he had lost the case and had been disqualified from the post of board chairman.[386] This disillusioned him so much that he promised not to get involved in board politics for atleast a decade.[387]

Despite the widespread apathy, the district board experience served a very useful purpose for the Congress. The Congress members of the board exemplified that those who were part of the government need not maintain any distance from the common people. As chairman, Gopabandhu Choudhury lived and behaved like an ordinary citizen.[388] The condition of the Cuttack road deteriorated so badly after the Kanika Party led the board that the chairman was impeached in March 1928.[389] The Congress-led board was also distinct for many other welfare measures such as digging of ponds and starting of *goshala*s for making milk available in Balasore. All these helped in the emergence of the Congress as an alternative force to the British government and in the breaking of the colonial ideological hegemony—a necessary task common to all anti-colonial forces.

[382] *Asha*, 20 February 1928.
[383] *Asha*, 19 March 1928.
[384] *Ibid*.
[385] *UD*, 7 July 1928.
[386] *Asha*, 9 January 1928.
[387] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 123.
[388] *UD*, 27 August 1927.
[389] *Asha*, 19 March 1928.

FOUR

Emergence of New Forces, 1927–29

On 26 January 1930, Congressmen took an independence pledge collectively at various places in the country. The pledge denounced the British for having ruined India in all spheres of life and asserted that it was a crime against man and God to submit to such a rule. In a sense, this inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), the second major mass movement against colonialism in India.

The Congress workers of Orissa actively participated on the occasion of the taking up of the independence pledge as well as in the subsequent Salt *Satyagraha*. To coincide with the breaking of the salt law at Dandi by Mahatma Gandhi and his followers on 13 April 1930, Congressmen in Orissa concentrated at Inchudi in Balasore district (and at some other places such as Kujang and Astaranga) and broke the salt law. Orissa, with a long coastline, had witnessed the decline of the native salt industry due to the British government's prohibition of its manufacture without licence. The nationalists had been criticising the government's salt policy and demanding the revival of the local salt industry in Orissa since the late nineteenth century. They justified the making of salt by the affected people by arguing that "the people living on the coast should be allowed to make salt free of duty".[1]

[1] For details about the nature of salt agitation and the issues involved in it, see Gopabandhu Das' speech in the B&O Provincial Council on 13 March 1919, in *Gopabandhu*, *The Legislator*, Cuttack, 1977, pp. 54–74; also see, Senapati, *Galpa Salpa*, pp. 94–111. In a short story, *Punar Mushiko Bhaba*, Senapati denounced a native constable for his overenthusiasm to prevent the making of salt by local people without licence which was very common then.

The gathering at Inchudi was so vast that it became "difficult for the police to control it". The police reportedly "persuaded" the local people "to manufacture salt in their houses" and to refrain from joining the Congress-led Salt *Satyagraha*.[2] This explains the massive spread of the *satyagraha* at Inchudi, which, the nationalists claimed, was second only to the Dandi *satyagraha* led by Mahatma Gandhi during the period.[3] The local Congressmen had been, in fact, coordinating a popular resistance movement on the issue of salt, which converged with Gandhi's salt *satyagraha*.

The spectacular success of the Salt *Satyagraha* and the subsequent CDM in 1930[4] seems to be in contrast with the passivity in the Congress during the intervening period between the NCM and the CDM. But it was not so. The intervening years included both passivity and the beginnings of a revival. The current discussion tries to examine the second aspect. The first aspect has already been discussed in the previous chapter.

The renewal or emergence of the nationalist wave is generally traced to 1928 and 1929. But there had been a continuity of underlying nationalist current throughout the period of the "aftermath". Despite the atmosphere of frustration and apathy, the UPCC, with some sincere workers and an organizational network, made efforts to overcome the sense of passivity and advance towards a mass movement. The efforts finally merged with the emergence of youth forces, caste movements, labour and tribal upsurge, women's movement and the anti-Simon Commission upsurge and the like. At one level, there was some kind of coordination between the Pro-changers and the No-changers, or *sahayogi*s and *asahayogi*s as they were locally called. The process of upsurge and emergence became easy because of such coordinations.

I

In December 1922, not less than 120 delegates from Orissa attended the Gaya Congress.[5] Although many of them had also used the

[2] FRBO, File No. 18/V of 1930, April, *Home Poll*.
[3] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe,* p. 128.
[4] See, P. Kar, *Indian National Congress*, pp. 158–94.
[5] *Rep. of INC,* Delegates list.

occasion to go on pilgrimage (for Gaya is a great Hindu pilgrim centre) and mobilization had been done on those lines,[6] Orissa's participation was very encouraging at a time when a full-scale decline had set in.

The Gaya Congress witnessed a split in the party. Further disillusionment gripped the rank and file.[7] The general public too maintained a kind of distance from the Congress. In order to clarify the confusion, the second-rung leaders of the party organized two public meetings at Cuttack on 8 and 9 January 1923. In these meetings held at Juma Masjid and Pultan Masjid, the speakers who included Rajkrishna Bose, Narayan Birabar Samant and Ram Prasad Singh, justified the split as a healthy trend in a vast assembly like the Congress. The development was natural and in the interest of the forthcoming mass movement, they pointed out.[8] In a bold move, the UPCC, in its Cuttack meeting on 12 January 1923, condemned the death sentences given to 172 people involved in the Chauri Chaura incident.[9] The *UD* in a relatively moderate tone appealed to the viceroy to reconsider the sentences, "for death sentences on so many people was inhuman".[10] In the higher court, when "at least 38 accused were acquitted" later, the nationalist press showed some relief.[11]

At the initiative of the Cuttack DCC, an education committee was constituted for rejuvenating the state of national education. The committee comprising three young activists, Pranakrishna Padhiary, Rajkrishna Bose and Gokulananda Mohanty, met at Jagatsinghpur on 1 February 1923 and resolved to: (*a*) prepare a new curriculum for incorporating more nationalist components, (*b*) evaluate the textbooks used in the national schools and to revise them if necessary, (*c*) frame rules and regulations of the USSP

[6] Rama Devi, *Mo Jibana Pathe,* p. 70; *Seba*, 4 November 1922.
[7] The UUC, revived in 1923, saw no sign of any student activities in its annual session to be held at Berhampur in early April 1923, observed the nationalist vernacular, *Asha*, 3 March 1923.
[8] *Searchlight*, 19 January 1923.
[9] *Samaj*, 27 January 1923.
[10] *UD*, 20 January 1923.
[11] *UD*, 12 May 1923.

Parishad, the national education council formed during the NCM, (*d*) make efforts to spread national education and (*e*) to collect funds for the purpose.[12] But such efforts at revitalizing national education were not followed up later.

On 18 March 1923, the UPCC observed the anniversary of "Mahatma Gandhi's Arrest Day" at some places in an attempt to create some political momentum. Meetings were held at Puri, Bolgarh, Jajpur, Kantabania, Balasore, Jaleswar, Berhampur, Jharsuguda and Cuttack.[13] *Hartal*, meetings and symbolic bonfire of foreign cloth were organized at certain nationalist pockets like Cuttack, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur.[14]

Similarly, in a press statement on 16 June, Gopabandhu Choudhury, who had emerged as a main leader of the No-changers in the state, appealed to the party workers to observe the anniversary of "Gopabandhu Das' Arrest Day" on 26 June 1923[15]. The "Day" was "celebrated" at a few places such as Cuttack, Puri, *Satyavadi*, Bir Ramchandrapur, Sarangajodi, Bolgarh, Kakatpur and Jharsuguda. Meetings were held and *kirtan*s organized on the occasion.[16] These meetings and celebrations, however, did not create public enthusiasm, despite the efforts of the local Congress leaders. The general mood was well explained in the *Asha*, which, while commenting on a Gopabandhu Das Arrest Day meeting held in Calcutta by the Orissa leaders there, lamented that the public attendance was not at all encouraging.[17] Another public meeting against "unusual hike in salt tax" attracted "some 200 people" at Cuttack in mid-April 1923, the *UD* reported. Even this number would have been difficult, if the "cooperators" had not extended help and a liberal pleader and president of the recently held UUC, Kalpataru Das, not presided over it.[18]

[12] *Searchlight*, 19 February 1923.
[13] *Samaj*, 24 March 1923.
[14] *UD*, 24 March 1923.
[15] *UD*, 16 June 1923.
[16] *UD*, 7 July 1923.
[17] *Asha*, 19 February 1923.
[18] *UD*, 21 April 1923.

On 1 May 1923, the flag *satyagraha* began following police objection to a procession carrying the national flag at Nagpur. Congress volunteers insisted on their right to carry flags where they willed, but the police promulgated Section 144 under the CrPC and arrested the volunteers. The development soon spread to other parts of the country. Volunteers went from different places to join the *satyagrahi*s at Nagpur.[19]

The flag *satyagraha* had its impact on the Congress workers in Orissa who tried to sustain the nationalist tempo by responding to it positively. The UPCC in its meeting at Balasore on 27 June 1923 resolved to send volunteers as well as funds to Nagpur.[20] The Balasore DCC, which had been revived after the release of Harekrishna Mahatab in late June, in a meeting at Guamal in June 1923 also resolved to send volunteers to Nagpur.[21] On 15 July, the Jharsuguda unit of the Congress sent four volunteers and the Khurda unit one volunteer to the venue.[22] The *satyagraha* created new hope among the youth in the Congress. Mahatab, who had taken over as the secretary of the party, called a meeting of the UPCC at Cuttack to (*a*) pass a resolution to initiate a *satyagraha* in Orissa on the Nagpur model, (*b*) to reorganize *khadi* work and to "apply for a loan from the AICC" to accelerate it and (*c*) to look into the question of national education, "which could no more be ignored".[23] On 18 July 1923, the UPCC observed a Flag Day.[24] Following the flag *satyagraha*, the Balasore DCC planned to launch a salt *satyagraha* and to manufacture "illicit salt" in the coastal areas from May 1923.[25] This, however, did not materialize either at the state or at the district level.

Lack of funds and workers were cited as the main reasons for such passivity.[26] Fear and police repression on the slightest pretext

[19] Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, p. 257.
[20] *Asha*, 9 July 1923.
[21] *Samaj*, 7 July 1923.
[22] *Samaj*, 21 July 1923; FRBO, File No. 25 of 1923, July, *Home Poll*.
[23] *Samaj*, 21 July 1923.
[24] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1923, July, *Home Poll*.
[25] FRBO, File No. 235 of 1923, May, *Home Poll*.
[26] *Asha*, 9 July 1923.

also contributed to the process. This was evident from an incident in March 1923. The UPCC had called for a *hartal* to observe the "Gandhi Arrest Day" on 18 March 1923. But the news could not reach Bhimdaspur village, supposedly a nationalist base, adjoining *Satyavadi*, due to lack of workers. The weekly village *haat* (market), which generally became the target on such occasions, thus started as usual. But the arrival of the police to "disrupt" the *hartal*, made the people realize that there might be some Congress programme on the agenda. Accordingly, the *haat* was deserted and the *hartal* became a success there.[27]

At Jagatsinghpur, the police promulgated Section 144 under the CrPC to prevent Babaji Ram Das and his Congress colleagues from collecting funds, locally called *mustibhiksha*, for the Alakashram.[28] After his release on 8 January 1923, Govind Mishra came to speak at a public meeting at Puri in February, only to be "gagged" immediately by the local police.[29] On 3 April 1923, Gopabandhu Choudhury came to attend a meeting at Banapur in the Puri district. A procession organized on the occasion was quickly disrupted by the police. Some processionists were also beaten up, reported the nationalist sources.[30]

The police, by threats or by its mere presence, could effectively disrupt a public meeting. Due to this, the Congress lost further ground. Both disillusionment with the Congress and fear of the police contributed to the passivity. Some leaders, like Pranakrishna Padhiary, in early 1925, criticized the workers for the situation for they had failed to allay public fears. But this did not help the UPCC gain ground, which continued to remain a party of not many cadres for the time being.

Seeing the reality, the *UD* was critical of the UPCC's decision to send volunteers to the Nagpur flag *satyagraha*. It criticized the government for not permitting the volunteers to carry the flag and unnecessarily aggravating the problem and letting it spread to other

[27] *Samaj*, 24 March 1923.
[28] *UD*, 31 March 1923.
[29] *Samaj*, 24 February 1923.
[30] *Samaj*, 7 April 1923.

places. At the same time, the paper also suggested to the local Congress Party to concentrate on more tangible and constructive issues like *khadi*, untouchability and other such programmes rather than on such a "trivial" issue, as the national flag had not yet been decided upon. In other words, the sending of volunteers was not as big a priority as the taking up of constructive programmes for the UPCC, which did not have a significant following during the period, the sympathetic *UD* pointed out.[31]

In 1923, the Congress also held some annual party conferences at the district and sub-divisional levels. On 22 and 23 April, the Balasore District Conference[32] and on 13 May and 29 June the Bhadrak[33] and Jagatsinghpur[34] sub-divisional conferences were held respectively. On 30 September, the Ganjam DCC met at Berhampur and resolved to hold the conference at Ghumsar, a large village to emphasize the Gandhian village reconstruction programme.[35] As per the plan, the conference was held from 10 to 12 November 1923. The conference *pandal* had been wrapped with *khadi*. Some of the slogans exhibited in the hall read: "If the resources of the nation are not drained out, even the poorest of the poor would have had enough food to eat and clothes to wear"; "Give up *baboogiri* [read use *swadeshi*], help the nation to retain its hard earned wealth". Besides such emphasis on *khadi*, the conference witnessed leaders from both the Pro-changers and the No-changers camps working for the success of this Congress programme. Nilakantha Das presided over the conference, while Niranjan Patnaik and Jaymangal Rath, two No-changers, were the main speakers at the conference. Harekrishna Mahatab from Balasore, Mahavir Singh from Sambalpur and Kripasindhu Hota from the Puri DCC had sent messages for the success of the conference. As the nationalist press claimed, there were 300 delegates and more than 2,000 people

[31] *UD*, 2 June 1923.
[32] *Samaj*, 28 April 1923.
[33] *Samaj*, 26 May 1923; *Sadhana*, 8 July 1923.
[34] *Samaj*, 7 July 1923.
[35] *Asha*, 31 September 1923.

attended the conference.[36] In order to emphasize on the aspect of unity, Nilakantha vehemently argued against untouchability, a Gandhian constructive programme, and also pointed out that there was no *Swaraj* Party in Orissa and as a candidate to the Central Legislative Assembly he would be guided only by the Congress if he won.[37]

In November 1923, elections were held to the Provincial Councils and the Central Legislative Assembly. The overwhelming success of the Swarajists, who were portrayed as "the people belonging to the Congress Party" and opponents of the "government party" helped in the revival of the Congress in Orissa. By June 1924, elections to the different district and local boards were held. The No-changers and the Pro-changers who had been contesting them on behalf of the Congress won in most of the seats.[38] Further, the release of some leaders like Harekrishna Mahatab, Nilakantha Das, Jadumani Mangaraj, Anant Mishra and some Kanika convicts such as Santha Behera, Gayadhar Samal and Baishnav Mohanty from jail by June 1923 was a great help to the party. By June 1924, Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahaptra, two senior as well as very articulate leaders of the party, were also released from jail after two years. All these developments helped the Provincial Congress to consolidate its position in the political circle.

Second, within the Congress it was the group of No-changers that was gradually gaining ground. This no doubt made the struggle between the two Congress camps intense and consequently led to the marginalization of the parochial regionalist elements among the Pro-changers in the party. It was reflected in the holding of the annual session of the Provincial Conference at Cuttack on 28 and 29 June 1924.[39] After the formation of the UPCC in December 1920, this was the first ever annual conference of the party that did not have the word "Congress" in it so that all sections of the nationalists could be brought in.

[36] *Asha*, 12 November 1923; *Searchlight*, 16 December 1923; *UD*, 24 November 1923.
[37] *Asha*, 12 November 1923.
[38] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, June, *Home Poll*.
[39] *UD*, 12 July 1924; *Searchlight*, 9 July 1924.

The increasing strength of the party among the nationalists as well as in the state was demonstrated by some of the resolutions passed in the conference. The UPCC (*a*) endorsed the non-cooperation and constructive programmes of the INC, (*b*) supported the Akali Movement in Punjab, the "Untouchables Movement" in Bhaikam and the *Math* Movement in Tarakeswar, (*c*) demanded "amalgamation" without which the "natural development of Orissa would never be possible", (*d*) demanded that "lower caste" be allowed entry in schools and temples, (*e*) showed its concern for the development of national education and opposed the Bihar and Orissa (B&O) government proposal of setting up of a university at Phulwari (Patna) at the cost of five million rupees while demanding that the money could be better utilized for the development of primary education, (*f*) resolved to set up an enquiry committee to look into the peasants' discontent in Kanika, (*g*) expressed concern over the "inhuman rule" in the native states and decided to write to the princes to improve the living conditions of people there, (*h*) resolved to constitute a committee to enquire into the question of religious endowment properties and to prepare the report by the end of the year and (*i*) constituted a committee comprising Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Jagabandhu Singh, Harekrishna Mahatab, Nilakantha Das and Gopabandhu Choudhury to give suggestions for the prevention of floods in the state.[40] In a significant move, the first resolution, which reiterated its faith in non-cooperation, mentioned boycott as the last resort and was seconded by none other than Nilakantha Das, the Swarajist leader from Orissa in the Central Legislative Assembly.[41]

The conference of 1924 was significant for many more reasons. It exemplified a firmer footing of the Congress and of the No-changers in politics after the NCM. It was here that Madhusudan Das, the veteran liberal leader, enrolled himself as a primary member of the party.[42] Mr Das, as discussed earlier, was well-known for his

[40] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[41] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, July, *Home Poll*.
[42] *Ibid.*

pioneering works in the growth of nationalism in the state, but had kept aloof from the Congress till 1924. His coming into the Congress proved that the party was relatively close to emergence. Further, Prafulla Chandra Roy, a known campaigner for *khadi* in Bengal, presided over the conference. This showed that, in a sense, Gandhian constructive work got due priority over other works by the local Congressmen. The main leader of the No-changers, Gopabandhu Das' release from jail coincided with the inauguration of the session. Besides, Gopabandhu was conferred the title of *Utkalmani* (jewel of Utkal) at this function. Common dinners were served in the conference to fight against caste distinctions. Youth, irrespective of their caste, served food in the dining hall. This can be considered a great move with regard to the removal of untouchability in a caste-ridden society like Orissa.[43]

Another significant feature of the 1924 conference was that, unlike in the preceding years, there were follow-up actions to the resolutions adopted in the sessions. Thus, soon after the session, Nanda Kishor Das, on behalf of the UPCC, served a letter to the princely states expressing serious concern about their administration and asking the princes to "improve" it.[44]

While the *Gadjat Basini* described it as an unnecessary interference on the part of the Congress in the affairs of princely states,[45] the official fortnightly report of the government feared that Congressmen were rapidly moving to start a "fresh agitation" in the princely states, particularly in Kanika.[46] Earlier, in the UPCC conference, Govind Mishra had lambasted the Kanika prince for his maladministration and others had expressed deep concern over the deteriorating administration (read violation of civil rights) in the princely states in general.[47]

However, this time the move was not a reason for an immediate clash with the *gadjat*s, probably because of lack of strength. Rather,

[43] *Searchlight,* 9 July 1924.
[44] *Gadjat Basini*, 23 August 1924.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, May, *Home Poll*.
[47] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, July, *Home Poll*.

the nationalist pressure was meant for protecting the tenants from litigations. It did not aim at any apparent anti-feudal agitation. Hence, the UPCC's letter to the *gadjat*s was said to be relatively moderate in its tone. Besides, in early December 1924, Gopabandhu Das finally struck a compromise with the Kanika prince after visiting the estate and assessing the situation.[48] Accordingly, both the parties, the tenants and the prince, agreed to withdraw the criminal cases filed against each other. The nationalists had realized that getting into litigation was no small a torture for the poor peasants. Earlier, they had tried to "de-politicize" the Kanika issue by arguing that "the agitation had no links with the non-cooperators". Politicization, they felt, would amount to more complications for the tenants. [49]

Agitation against the *mahant*s of the *math*s (monasteries) was another issue that kept the Congressmen engaged and helped the nationalist current to sustain itself during the period. The Akali Movement launched in Punjab since March 1922 for bringing reforms in the gurudwaras had probably inspired the Orissa Congressmen to begin a similar kind of agitation for reforming the age old *math*s. The UPCC at Cuttack had passed a resolution to that effect in 1924.[50]

The *Asha* wrote that "the conditions in many *math*s are really bad. There are instances of misuse of religious endowment properties. It must be checked".[51] The *Gadjat Basini* expressed concern that the *mahant*s, supposedly the guardians of religious properties, were extravagant in their personal expenditure. Many of them had motorcars and kept *seba dasi*s (temple girls) for personal use, all in the name of religion.[52] In February 1925, a Mahavir Dal was formed in Puri, the centre of *math*s, "with the objective of restoring the sanctity of holy places" and for bringing religious reforms in the *math*s.[53] Following the news of a dinner

[48] FRBO, File No. 25 of 1924, December, *Home Poll*; *Gadjat Basini*, 13 December 1924.
[49] *UD*, 28 April 1923.
[50] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[51] *Asha*, 14 May 1923.
[52] *Gadjat Basini*, 15 November 1924.
[53] *Searchlight*, 11 February 1925.

party being hosted by the *mahant* of Puri Emar *math* in honour of the lieutenant governor of the B&O government on 22 April 1925, the Puri District Congress called a *hartal* on the next day.[54] The dinner party, for which the *mahant* had allegedly spent some Rs 12,000 from the *math* funds, created strong resentment among the people.[55] This was reflected in the spontaneous response to the *hartal*. In the evening (23 April), a public meeting was held and resolutions were passed condemning the *mahant*, describing his action as anti-religious and congratulating the people for their support to the *hartal*. Following the incident, Gopabandhu Das and seven other leaders were "gagged" under Section 144 of the CrPC.[56] From then on, the venue of the *Math* Movement shifted to the Councils and Assembly where the Swarajist members, especially Godavarish Mishra and Nilakantha Das, demanded legislation for control of religious endowment properties.[57]

In early August 1928, another meeting was held in Puri against the misuse of *math* funds by the *mahant*s. While expressing his gratitude to the people for attending the meeting and for supporting the cause, Godavarish Mishra stated that "not many people generally come to attend public meetings in Puri these days. But it is surprising that so many people have come to attend this meeting".[58] In fact, the leader wanted to discuss the issue in public before putting it forward in the council on 16 August 1928.[59] As it is apparent, though the nationalists took up the cause of religious properties in general, public ire was more against those *mahant*s who played a loyalist role to the government. The *hartal* against the Emar *math* became quite intense, because the *mahant* was found guilty of hosting an extravagant dinner for the B&O Lieutenant Governor in 1925. The people were up against him for his unqualified support to the alien

[54] *Samaj*, 25 April 1925.
[55] *UD*, 2 May 1925.
[56] *Samaj*, 25 April 1925.
[57] Godavarish Mishra, 19 August 1926, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XIV, p. 172; Godavarish Mishra, 16 August 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XIII, p. 25; Nilakantha Das, 30 January 1925; *LAD*, Vol. V, p. 496.
[58] *Asha*, 6 August 1928.
[59] Godavarish Mishra, 16 August 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVIII, p. 25.

British official. Thus, at times, the British were spared, but probably their Indian collaborators were not! And the nationalists used such occasions for creating the desired momentum for their party.

Land settlement operations were another local issue, which had the potential of growing into a political movement during the period. In a meeting in March 1923, the UUC regretted that the operation had not been suspended in Balasore district, despite several petitions and memorandum sent against it.[60] When the operation was extended to other districts, the *UD* warned in August 1923 that, as in Balasore, the peasants would suffer everywhere because of it. The suffering would be more because, instead of the Oriya-knowing locals, people from Bihar had been recruited as officials who had "very little acquaintance with the local traditions and customs". It was because of such ignorant and apathetic officials that the standing crops were destroyed during operations and rent hiked invariably after the operations, the press complained. Settlement was also the time for legalizing the encroachment of community land by some people who were closer to the authorities.[61]

In 1924, after the settlement operations, the government proposed a land revenue hike in Orissa. The proposal was for a 25 per cent hike on *raiyati* and 50 per cent hike on *baiyafti* and *nijcha* lands.[62] In January 1925, the *UD* pointed out that the settlement as well as the hike came at a time when the paying capacity of the peasantry was fast deteriorating.[63] The agitated nationalists held a mass meeting to protest against the hike at Puri on 29 March 1925. A committee consisting of both the Swarajists like Jagabandhu Singh and non-Swarajists like Gopabandhu Das, Artatrana Mishra, Banamali Das and Dibyasingh Panigrahi was formed to chalk out strategies for extending the agitation to the villages.[64] The Balasore District Conference at Soro on 4 and 5 April 1925 passed a similar resolution against the hike and formed a committee to launch a

[60] *Asha*, 26 March 1923.
[61] *UD*, 4 August 1923; Mahatab, *Gandhi O Odisa*, Cuttack, 1969, p. 46.
[62] Jagabandhu Singh, 27 August 1925, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XII, p. 358.
[63] *UD*, 17 January 1925.
[64] *Samaj*, 4 April 1925; *Searchlight*, 17 April 1925.

mass agitation on the issue.[65] However, when the settlement agitation failed to gather any momentum even after one year, the *Asha* felt very "bad" and informed that the Puri DCC would meet on 7 July 1926 to decide the future course of protest against the hike.[66]

Floods, a chronic problem, always attracted the nationalists' attention in Orissa. Apart from providing relief themselves, they mobilized the affected people to demand prevention from floods during the 1920s. Such efforts to internalize a local issue helped the Congress in the long run.

According to Gopabandhu Das, floods followed by famine and starvation deaths posed the greatest threat to the survival of the human civilization in Orissa. "What is the point in asking for *Swaraj* or Orissa union before preventing the floods?" he asked. "The people inside the councils must agitate for its prevention. The people outside [the councils] also must fight. Since the government was unable to do anything people must take the reins in their own hands and do the needful", he suggested.[67] For bringing a permanent solution to the floods, spending of any amount of money was "not too much". "Even if two year's total revenue of Orissa is spent [for opening the river mouth and releasing the flood water into the sea] let it be done. This is not a big amount if lakhs of people… would be benefited".[68] On this issue he never hesitated to cooperate with the government though he knew well that the latter was not ready for providing any permanent solution to the problem.[69]

In the UPCC of 1924, a resolution was passed to mobilize the people on the issue of flood relief. A committee consisting of both the Swarajists and the non-Swarajists like Nilakantha Das,

[65] *Samaj*, 141 April 1925.

[66] *Asha*, 28 June 1926.

[67] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 22 August 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 156.

[68] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 1 August 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II., p. 151.

[69] Gopabandhu accompanied the executive member of the B&O Council when the latter wished to survey the flood-affected areas in Puri, but left him half-way because the *saheb* was not willing to visit those villages which were badly affected while Gopabandhu insisted on seeing them. Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 26 December 1925, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II., p. 165.

Jagabandhu Singh, Harekrishna Mahatab, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Gopabandhu Choudhury was constituted for the purpose.[70] In 1925, the Congress at its Bolgarh session reiterated its resolve to fight for the prevention of floods and famine in Orissa. Once again, it was decided that a committee would be formed for the purpose.[71] However, all these resolutions did not lead to any mass agitation on the issue in 1925 and 1926. On 12 August 1927, once again a *Banya Pratikar Samiti* (Flood Prevention Committee) was formed with Gopobandhu Das as president.[72] While articulating the purpose, Gopabandhu clarified that "since no amount of relief [flood relief] could solve the chronic problem, it [the Committee] would mobilize the flood victims to demand prevention of floods".[73] Mahatma Gandhi, who was likely to visit Orissa from 20 November 1927, would be requested to personally lead and guide the movement, provided the mobilization was up to expectation, Gopabandhu assured the people in a write-up.[74]

On 22 and 23 October 1927, the first conference of the flood victims of Orissa was held at Cuttack. More than 350 delegates from Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, the three flood-affected districts, attended it. Delegates even from interior villages like Kakatpur and Brahmagiri in the Puri district and Bhograi and Baliapal in the Balasore district came to take part in the conference. Decisions were taken to form branch committees at the district, sub-division and village levels for broadening the base of the movement. Even landlords and zamindars, like the Madhupur zamindar, Narayan Dhir Samant, were invited to the conference because they were as much affected as others were by the floods.[75]

The Flood Prevention Conference of 1927 passed the following resolutions to be submitted to the government for appropriate action. It demanded that the government should form a committee with a

[70] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[71] *Asha*, 23 November 1925.
[72] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 1 September 1927, in *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 260.
[73] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 17 September 1927, in *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 266.
[74] *Ibid*., p. 267.
[75] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 29 October 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, pp. 273–79.

non-official majority to suggest long-term measures for the prevention of floods. Other demands included the appointment of a separate enquiry committee by the government to trace the history of floods as well as to assess the loss caused by floods in Orissa; suspension of settlement operations and of collection of revenue in the flood-affected areas till the situation improved. The conference also decided to launch an agitation against hike in land revenue.[76]

By the beginning of November 1927, three district units were formed, and by 12 November 1927, the district conferences were held at Bhakud (Cuttack), Nimapara (Puri) and Balasore. The state committee also hoped to form all the sub-division and *thana*-level units by the end of the month.[77] The flood victims' agitation, which continued till 1928, planned to hold another state-level conference at Nimapada on 6 and 7 February 1928. As president, Gopabandu Das invited the district magistrate of Puri and other officials to the conference for the floods were "a general problem" and not a problem of the nationalists alone. A solution to the problem could be arrived at only when both officials and non-officials worked together.[78] It was with such broad understanding that the Congress agreed to a delegation comprising the prince of Madhupur estate, liberal leader Laxmidhar Mohanty and Congress representatives Lingaraj Mishra and C.F. Andrews, to meet the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar and Orissa on 3 January 1928.[79]

Despite the nationalists' efforts, the government was apathetic to the cause and the masses hesitated to agitate on the issue. In 1927, Gopabandhu Das analyzed the situation and commented that the money spent for controlling floods in Orissa had so far been a waste, because the authorities did not have a broad vision about the issue. He referred to the "Bengal Government" which had spent a lot of money in Orissa (when Orissa was a part of the Bengal Presidency) some 60–70 years back, but with no significant effect. He further said:

[76] *Sadhana*, 3 November 1927.
[77] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 12 November 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 283.
[78] *Asha*, 9 January 1928.
[79] *Ibid.*

> In 1920, as per the suggestion of the Council, the Bihar and Orissa government set up a Flood Enquiry Committee which spent more than Rs 60,000–70,000; and the money got over. In one word, the government is not at all serious about protecting the ryots of Orissa [from floods]. The ryots are also deep in slumber; they are not doing anything so as to activate the government. How long will this [state of affairs] continue? Now the government has announced to assess the situation by a committee of expert engineers. But the people who know [the past] in Orissa cannot have any hope on the outcome of that committee. The people should have their own committee alongside the government committee, find out the solution and mobilize the masses on the issue.[80]

Referring to a news item on the floods in Great Britain and the abundance of official relief there, the *Asha* commented that the government paid so much of attention there to minimize its adverse effects. Food was supplied to the stranded people by aeroplane. Newspapers were regularly distributed and all precautions taken to prevent the outbreak of diseases such as cholera and the like in the floods-affected areas. But every year thousands of people perish in Orissa due to floods, nobody (government) thinks it wise to bother about them.[81]

Prevention of floods was such a grave issue that the nationalists could keep aside all other issues like *swaraj* and Orissa union for the sake of launching a mass movement for it. In fact, Niranjan Patnaik requested Gandhi to lead the movement and give a new direction to it. As the local nationalist sources claimed, Mahatma Gandhi agreed to help if there was a mass upsurge for it in Orissa. While revealing the entire plan, Gopabandhu Das called upon the people to jump into the struggle. Only then "there could be a solution". Otherwise, civilization would be extinct in Orissa very soon, he warned.[82]

[80] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 17 September 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 266.
[81] *Asha*, 16 January 1928.
[82] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 17 September 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. II, p. 267.

The developments between 1923 and 1927 demonstrated that Congressmen were neither confined only to the constructive programme and speeches and debates in the councils, nor reduced only to factionalism and regionalism in the party. They were constantly looking for opportunities to transform the "non-active phase" into an "active phase" of mass action, considered to be the remedy to all socio-political problems. For this purpose, on the one hand, the organizational structure of the party was sustained and, on the other hand, local issues were internalized and highlighted. The issues taken up for agitation, whether it was land settlement operation or flood prevention, were purely local and regional in nature, which enriched the nationalists with vivid experiences and made their movement a purely local development without any imposition of ideas or issues from above. Even the Akali Movement, which inspired them, had a regional cast and got reflected in the form of an agitation for reforms in the *math*s. Mass participation in none of these movements was very encouraging. This was a stark reality in Orissa during the period. As a result, the nationalist agitations were mostly confined to the formation of committees, passing of resolutions and holding of a few public meetings in urban pockets. Their failure to mobilize the people led them to request Mahatma Gandhi to lead and guide the local movement and to give a new lease to the moribund political life in Orissa.[83]

A significant aspect of the nationalist developments in Orissa during the period was that mass movements and mass mobilization were seen as a means and not an end in themselves. Because of this, while mobilizing the people, at times Congressmen interacted with the "other party" with the objective of reaching a meaningful and concrete solution. Thus, efforts to revive the Kanika agitation and Gopabandhu's personal visit to Kanika to convince the prince to withdraw the criminal cases against the tenants went on simultaneously in 1924. Similarly, efforts to launch the flood

[83] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 24 *September* 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 380.

agitation and Gopabandhu's decision to accompany the visiting official to survey the flood-affected areas went side by side in 1925.

The lack of any mass upsurge during the period probably compelled the nationalists to act as a pressure group to get at least the minimum for the victims, whom they mobilized, like the moderates of the pre-Gandhian phase. They were aware of their limitations and did not talk or act like a strong mass party in Orissa. However, because of their constant efforts to revive the Congress against all such limitations and due to their sincere involvement in local issues, they were retained in the leadership when the new forces emerged in 1928 and 1929 and the CDM was launched thereafter in 1930.

II

The two years preceding 1930 witnessed the beginning of a new phase in the Congress movement. New forces of labour, women, tribals and peasants, youth and students, and "low" castes formed the rising. Their emergence surcharged the general political atmosphere in the country. Many of these forces might not have necessarily grown within the Congress framework, but their hostility towards the British government brought them closer to the Congress, which got radicalized in the process. Later, they together advanced the programme of civil disobedience in different parts of the country. They mutually benefited due to such meaningful interaction among themselves.

The scene of passivity, which had engulfed the political atmosphere since 1923, began to change with the announcement of an all-white Simon Commission on 8 November 1927. Officially known as the Indian Statutory Commission, it was to recommend whether India was ready for further constitutional progress after the reforms of 1919. The non-inclusion of any Indian member in the Commission that claimed the right to decide the political future of the country was an insult that none of these new forces could swallow. Very soon, nationalists of all varieties began to gather on one platform for expressing their resentment against the constitution

of the Simon Commission. There was extraordinary unity in their opposition to the Commission. New hopes were created for a broad united front to challenge British colonialism in India.

II.a

In Orissa, the emergence of the nationalist wave coincided with the flood victims' agitation in the latter part of 1927 and Gandhi's timely visit in December 1927. Initially Gandhi's one-month-long *padyatra* was scheduled to begin on 1 November 1927. Later, the visit was postponed to 20 November and then to 4 December 1927. The period of the *padyatra* was also shortened to 20 days because of Gandhi's illness during the period. The news of Gandhi's visit created a stir in Orissa. While commenting critically on the euphoria, Gopabandhu wrote that many people had been writing in newspapers about how all problems could be communicated to Gandhi during his forthcoming visit to Orissa. "The villages need cleaning; the Orissa poets are imitating; the Orissa people are lazy…. Is it that Gandhi will clean the streets by holding a broom himself, or launch a *sahitya samaj* to criticize the poets or activate the people by flogging them?" He further said that Mahatma Gandhi or even God could not help unless the people helped themselves.[84] Earlier, while informing the people about Gandhi's forthcoming visit, Gopabandhu had clarified that the visit was not meant for the collection of funds unlike in many other provinces. Its purpose was to campaign for *khadi* in the state. It could be successful if at least 10,000 new primary members (of the Congress) were enrolled and several *khadi* centres like the Jagatsinghpur Alakashram were started in different places of the state. Sincere and serious works in the sphere of prohibition, removal of untouchability and flood prevention could also make Gandhi happy, Gopabandhu pointed out in February 1927.[85]

[84] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 19 November 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 385.
[85] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 5 February 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 329.

On 4 December 1927, Gandhi reached Berhampur after completing his *padyatra* in Andhra. He planned to cover all districts of Orissa within a period of 20 days.[86] Congress leaders like Govind Mishra, Gopabandhu Das and Niranjan Patnaik coordinated Gandhi's tour programme in Orissa. A reception committee comprising different political groups like the Hindu Mahasabha (Janakinath Bose) and the liberals (Sridhar Mohanty) was formed for the purpose.[87] At the local level, Swarajists like Nilakantha Das and Godavarish Mishra were involved for coordinating the meetings at Puri and Banapur respectively. The coming together of different nationalist groups on this occasion was a significant development during the period. It broadened the scope for a combined nationalist showdown with the colonial state in the near future.

At Berhampur, Gandhi addressed a women's meeting on 4 December 1927 and suggested to the women that they should boycott saris made of foreign cloth and foreign ornaments. He also suggested that they should not consider anyone untouchable, spin the *charkha* at least half an hour a day and liberally contribute to the *khadi* fund.[88] In a separate meeting with the local students there, he advised them to realize their inner strength through prayer. Gandhi was given two purses there—one by the Oriya-speaking people and the other by the local Telugu-speaking people of Berhampur.[89] On 6 December 1927, in a public meeting at Chhatrapur, another outlying tract like Berhampur, Gandhi spoke on the issue of regionalism and appealed to the people to refrain from any "unhealthy competition between sister languages". Further, he stated that "provincialism…prevented the motion of nationalism" in the country.[90]

Unlike in other provinces, none of the district boards and municipalities of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore (barring the Cuttack

[86] *UD*, 26 November 1927; *Samaj*, 10 December 1927.
[87] *UD*, 26 November 1927.
[88] CWMG, 1927–29, Vol. XXXV, Ahmedabad, 1969, pp. 359–60.
[89] *Ibid.*
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 364.

Municipality) dared to give a public reception to Gandhi.[91] In Khurda, the police had warned people not to attend Gandhi's meeting lest "they [people] would be trampled upon by horses and shot down by soldiers".[92] Gandhi addressed two meetings in that area, one at Banapur on 8 December 1927 and the other at Bolgarh on 10 December 1927, which was a direct challenge to the fear-creating police, local princes and zamindars. Furthermore, in both the places Gandhi referred to the issue of fear and described it as "more deadly than diseases". He said, "I feel humiliated that whereas I cannot put up with oppression from foreigners, the country's zamindars and officials have been frightening people". He advised people to fear no one except God.[93] The fear, which engulfed the people, worried Gandhi so much so that in a write-up published in the *Young India* (22 December 1927) he mentioned, "Never since the days of Champaran [1917] have I witnessed such death like quiet as I did on entering political Orissa through Banapur. And I fear that the quiet in Orissa was worse than Champaran…. The workers of Orissa have to teach the *ryot* to shed the oppressive nervous timidity bordering on cowardice".[94]

Everywhere Gandhi emphasized the spread of *khadi*. He advised the *khadi* workers "to realize the spirit of the movement" and to "shape" their "life accordingly".[95] While requesting people to welcome Gandhi, earlier Gopabandhu had written, "All those who wish to attend his meeting, all those who want to meet him… must wear *khadi*. I pray to all my country people for this with folded hands". As Gopabandhu pointed out, it was more so because "Mahatma Gandhi has been arguing all the times that *khadi* could liberate Orissa from its poverty", the biggest deterrent to "the *swaraj* of India".[96]

While commenting on Gandhi's tour and advice to the people, Gopabandhu wrote that Gandhi's four simple advices were, first,

[91] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 3 December 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 387.
[92] *CWMG*, Vol. XXXV, p. 369.
[93] *Ibid*., pp. 369 and 372.
[94] *CWMG*, Vol. XXXV, p. 407.
[95] Gandhi's speech at Cuttack, 20 December 1927, *Ibid*., pp. 400–401.
[96] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 24 September 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 381.

not to fear any one like the raja, zamindar, police or any other official; second, not to waste time and engage in, if nothing else, spinning of khadi; third, not to practise untouchability because discrimination between human beings should not remain and fourth, to promote prohibition. As Gopabandhu argued, Mahatma Gandhi's advice was not new, but extremely important for Orissa. "Gandhi is right in reading the pulse of Oriya nation". The four pieces of advice were complementary to one another and were the key to national development in the state.[97] On 21 December 1927, Gandhi left for Madras from Cuttack.

II.b

On 14 January 1928, the UPCC in a meeting at Cuttack unanimously passed a resolution to boycott the Simon Commission and to organize a *hartal* all over the state on 3 February 1928 as a mark of protest. A committee was formed to coordinate the Anti-Simon Movement in Orissa. The members were Gopabandhu Das, Harekrishna Mahatab, Biswanath Mishra, Sashi Bhusan Rath, Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Rajkrishna Bose.[98] The inclusion of Sashi Bhusan Rath, a prominent Swarajist leader from Ganjam, and Laxmi Narayan Mishra from Sambalpur, which had severed all relations with the UPCC after the NCM, was a significant development because Congressmen belonging to different trends and different places had joined together to boycott the Commission. The UPCC resolution was endorsed by the different DCCs. For example, Bansidhar Mishra, secretary of the Cuttack DCC, held a meeting at Cuttack on 15 January 1928 and appealed to the people to make the *hartal* a great success in the district.[99]

The *hartal* was a big success in Cuttack town and was reported to be the biggest of its kind in recent years.[100] In the morning, the Congress workers took out a procession shouting slogans and singing "national" songs. They appealed to the people to observe

[97] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 24 December 1927, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 391–93.
[98] *Asha*, 30 January 1928; *UD*, 21 January 1928.
[99] *Asha*, 23 January 1928; *UD*, 21 January 1928.
[100] *Samaj*, 8 February 1928.

the *hartal*. All shops and godowns were closed. Except for one student in the medical school, no one attended classes in schools and colleges. The evening show of films were cancelled in the talkies. This was followed by a public meeting in the town. Presided over by Laxmi Narayan Sahu, a known liberal leader, the meeting condemned the Simon Commission for it had ignored Indian opinion, and requested the council members to withdraw their cooperation with the Commission. In the meeting it was demanded that only Indians be empowered to assess the constitutional status of the country. Besides, the Cuttack Municipality was condemned for its objection to the observance of a *hartal* in the town.[101] At Berhampur, hotels and shops were closed. All the printing presses were closed till 4 pm. The municipality office and the municipality schools, which worked under the control of the municipality, were non-functional because the chairman, who supported the boycott, had asked them to do so. The students boycotted the classes in the Khalikote College. Besides, buses also did not ply on the *hartal* day.[102] The *hartal* was also reported to be fully successful in Sambalpur despite the authorities' attempts to foil it.[103] In many other small towns like Balasore, Soro, Khandatapada, Basta, Jaleswar, Bhadrak, Bhandaripokhari in Balasore district and Bargarh and Jharsuguda in Sambalpur district also the *hartal* was observed with the closure of shops, boycott of schools and holding of meetings in the evening. The *hartal* was reported to have spread to some villages such as Tihidi, Guamal, Ramchandrapur and Gujidarada in the Bhadrak sub-division.[104]

The resentment against the Simon Commission also got articulated in the different Congress district conferences held between February and April 1928. There the speakers severely criticized the government's decision to form a commission with no Indian member to decide about the fate of the country. All these speeches culminated in resolutions, which endorsed the Congress

[101] *Samaj*, 8 February 1928; *UD*, 11 February 1928.
[102] *Asha*, 6 February 1928.
[103] *Asha*, 13 February 1928.
[104] *UD*, 11 February 1928.

decision to boycott the Commission at all cost. Thus, in early February 1928, the Ganjam District Conference at Adapada,[105] on 8 and 9 April the Cuttack Conference at Kenduapatna,[106] on 19 and 20 April the Puri Conference at Kakatpur[107] and the Balasore Conference at Dhamnagar passed resolutions to that effect.[108] A few more meetings were held at Sambalpur and Puri (19 August 1928) where the speakers called upon the people of Utkal to effectively demonstrate their resentment through a total boycott of the Commission.[109]

The vernacular press was far more vocal than others in its opposition to the Commission. Even at the time of the NCM there was no such unanimity among the nationalist press as during the anti-Simon agitation. For them, the continuance of the Commission symbolized the killing of both the broader national interests as well as the regional interests of Orissa. Hence, opposition to the Commission was imperative for furthering the native interests.

In a hard-hitting editorial, the *Asha* wrote on 9 January 1928:

> When the lieutenant governor of Bihar and Orissa was asked about Orissa union, his reply was, only the Royal Commission could take a decision on this matter…. Now there is a current sweeping across the country to boycott the commission. By giving such a statement, the lieutenant governor *saheb* probably plans to divert the attention to the issue of union, so that the Oriyas would cooperate with the commission and leave the broader national movement and issue aside. This is like putting salt to the injury. Some ten years ago during the "Montagu Report", such a thing had happened and the Oriyas were cheated out and out. No strategy by the *saheb* to mislead the people on this matter would work this time. The Oriyas have many more reasons than others to boycott the Royal Commission…. Any cooperation with the Simon Commission is nothing but suicidal for the Oriya nation.[110]

[105] *Samaj*, 8 February 1928.
[106] *UD*, 28 April 1928.
[107] *UD*, 5 May 1928.
[108] Lingaraj Mishra, 20 August 1928, in *B&O LCP*, 1928, Vol. XVIII, p. 211.
[109] *Samaj*, 22 August 1928.
[110] *Asha*, 9 January 1928.

Besides the Orissa union issue, there were many other reasons why the nationalists might have wanted to boycott the Commission. The *Asha* elaborated them in another editorial on 23 January 1928. It wrote:

> The British rule has fastened our ankles by shackles. We have been made dependent and defenceless on every small matter. In such a situation, who would believe that the commission desires to emancipate us? Can it give what we want? We want curtailment in defence expenditure. We want organization of a national defence force. We want the right to prepare our budget…. We say no need to have all these over-paid officials in administration. Our poverty-stricken country cannot afford them. We demand an end to all discriminations between "you" and "us" …which one of these demands could the Simon Commission concede? Simon *saheb* may be very intelligent and capable. So what? …We need faithful persons. How can we have faith in somebody sent by a government, which has no faith in us…. The Commission is coming to enslave us further. Any cooperation with it will only bring loss and no gain to us.[111]

Gopabandhu Das, as the editor of the *Samaj*, regularly reported about the stiff resistance that the Simon Commission had been facing in different parts of the country. "From the treatment they [the Commission members] got, the amount of insult they incurred, they might have realized that the people are firm in their belief [opposition] towards the Commission. If not in public, at least in private they would confide it. But will it be of any help? … Unless the resentment is expressed in the form of mass action, they might not even concede", he wrote in March 1928.[112] He analyzed the boycott as "unpreceded in the last 10 years" and ridiculed the Commission's claim that it was welcomed in India. "Not alone the Congress, but also the Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Sikh Mandal, Liberal Federation, Home Rule League and many others

[111] *Asha*, 23 January 1928.
[112] Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 28 March 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 402.

have resolved to non-cooperate with the Commission". Gopabandhu asked, "How could any Indian with some self-respect left in him cooperate with it?" Referring to the non-inclusion of any Indian member, he pointed out, if not Congressmen, "at least some camp followers", "who were as faithful" to the British "as dogs" might have been taken in it as a reward for their unqualified support in the past.[113]

Like the *Asha*, the *Samaj* also doubted the worth of the Commission. It asked, "What can they [the British] give to India? Can they really give anything? They have resolved to retain India for eternity. Let there be several commissions after commissions; you please them, you cooperate with them, but they cannot have any mercy on you", because retaining India was essential for their growth. "Where the king is the looter, can you measure the suffering of the subject?" The *Samaj* described the Simon Commission as a farce because its reports were written even before the enquiry was conducted. In conclusion it said that the remedy was to prepare oneself for mass action. "The leaders and the educated people must go around the country with this objective. The people should also realize this".[114]

Similarly, the *UD* argued in late February 1928 that the Commission must go back because the majority of the people (Indians) were against it. The anti-Simon *hartal* throughout the length and breadth of the country had amply demonstrated it.[115] Referring to the success of the *hartal*, it firmly announced that Orissa could no longer afford to cooperate with the government by extending any welcome to the Commission. In the past, she gained nothing in lieu of her cooperation. Furthermore, when the rest of the country was one in its opposition, how could Orissa take an isolated stand?[116]

The nationalists' resentment against the Simon Commission was also heard in the B&O Provincial Council. In a hard-hitting speech,

[113] Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 11 April 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 405–07.
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *UD*, 25 February 1928.
[116] *UD*, 3 March 1928.

Lingaraj Mishra, the Congress member from south Puri, condemned the non-inclusion of any Indian members in the Commission as a "direct challenge by the British Parliament to the sense of honour and self-respect of the Indians". He recollected the history of the "Oriya Movement" and explained that its petitions were always consigned to the waste-paper basket. That is why Orissa was "unanimous in her decision" that she would have "nothing to do with the sham Simon Commission" or "with any committee or commission". Orissa's grievances could be redressed only by "throwing in [our] lot with the rest of India and by having nothing to do with this colossal hoax".[117] Congress members like Lingaraj Mishra from the Council and Nilakantha Das and Bhubanananda Das from the Central Assembly, offered to resign in protest of the constitution of the Simon Commission.[118]

While the nationalists as a whole were unanimous in their boycott plan under the Congress leadership, a section of the loyalists decided to cooperate with the Commission on the pretext of buttressing the case of "amalgamation" and facilitating the creation of a separate Orissa province. The loyalists' cooperation included activities like welcoming the visiting Commission team at railway stations, supporting the official resolution in defence of the Commission in the B&O Provincial Council and sending of memorandum to the Commission and the like. Rajendra Narayan Bhanjdeo, the zamindar (locally called *raja*) of Kanika and a member of the B&O Provincial Council led them in this regard. In fact, the nationalists' explanation that the Commission would adversely affect the cause of the Oriya Movement was aimed at frustrating these loyalists' game plan.

Under the banner of one Orissa Liberal League, the loyalists decided to welcome the Commission in February 1928.[119] By sending a memorandum on the need for a separate Orissa, the league welcomed the Commission.[120] When a committee was formed in

[117] *B&O LCP*, 20 August 1928, Vol. XVIII, pp. 227–28.
[118] *UD*, 5 May 1928.
[119] *Asha*, 13 February 1928.
[120] *UD*, 26 May 1928; *Asha*, 16 July 1928.

the B&O Provincial Council to welcome the Commission, Rajendra Narayan Bhanjdeo and Laxmidhar Mohanty were made its members.[121] Srikrishna Mahapatra, a former police officer, known for the police firing at Kanika in 1922 and a nominated council member at the time, defended the formation of the Commission and described the grievance (of the Indians that they were not made members) as "purely sentimental" and the boycott as "fatal to the interest of the province". He argued that the only course left to the people of Orissa was to cooperate with the Simon Commission.[122] Laxmidhar Mohanty, a zamindar member of the B&O Council and a leader of the Orissa Liberal League, also supported the move for cooperation with the Commission.[123]

Ridiculing the Liberal League, the *Asha* doubted its existence[124] while Gopabandhu Das confirmed that such a solitary act had no other purpose but to aim at furthering the selfish interests of a few individuals. Referring to the loyalists' welcome, another paper satirically wrote, after the Commission granted a separate Orissa province, that the Kanika prince would be the governor designate as a reward for his help![125] Objecting to the sending of a telegram by the League, even a section of the liberals comprising Laxmi Narayan Sahu, Mathuranand Mohanty, Kritibas Nanda and Anand Das deserted the League and joined the mainstream nationalists. In other words, the section which remained outside the Congress and led the boycott movement while deciding to cooperate with the commission, remained a very insignificant group. Described as "title bearers and title seekers who were too anxious to prove true to their salt and to cooperate with the government in any circumstances and at any cost",[126] they failed to evoke any positive response among the people. However, because of their presence, the Anti-Simon Movement appeared very real to the nationalists in Orissa. After

[121] *Asha*, 27 August 1928; *B&O LCP*, 23 August 1928, Vol. XVIII, p. 481.
[122] *B&O LCP*, 20 August 1928, Vol. XVIII, p. 221.
[123] *Ibid.*
[124] *Asha*, 13 February 1928.
[125] Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 11 April 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 405; reported in the *Searchlight*, 4 November 1928.
[126] *UD*, 26 May 1928; *Asha*, 16 July 1928.

the scathing attack on the Simon Commission, it was this group of loyalists which was mainly targeted during the period.

II.c

In 1927, the Bombay government announced a revenue hike of 22 per cent in the Bardoli taluka in the Surat district of Gujarat. This was despite the decline in cotton prices. The hike led to preparations for a no-revenue campaign by Congress leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel in Bardoli.[127] Very soon Bardoli became a national issue. Throughout the last quarter of 1927 and the first half of 1928, it became a major point of discussion in the nationalist circle. "Bardoli" helped in the creation of a nationalist wave in many parts of the country.

In Orissa, the news about Bardoli created almost a stir among the nationalists. The vernacular press highlighted the issues raised there, praised the peasants for their stiff resistance to the authorities and described the *satyagraha* as a great step towards national freedom. It helped in the creation of a general awareness about the nationalist struggle outside the state and generated empathy for agrarian issues. But more than that, similar agitations were initiated at the local level. Probably Bardoli helped the local nationalist leaders and cadres to cast their local agrarian issues in the context of a broad national and anti-colonial movement. The idea that a local peasant issue could be an inseparable part of the broad anti-British agitation got strengthened after the spread of the news about the Bardoli *Satyagraha*. The result was widespread preparation for a no-rent campaign at Pichukoli in Khurda and the launch of states peoples' movement in the *gadjat*s of Bamanda and Nilagiri during the period.

In May 1928, the *UD* discussed the Bardoli *Satyagraha* and extended its moral support to the peasants there.[128] Before that, the *Asha* had reported that there was "23 per cent rent hike" in Bardoli at a time when the ryots did not have the capacity to pay. It

[127] See, Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 277.
[128] *UD*, 12 May 1928.

was also told that Vallabhabhai Patel would lead the *satyagraha* there.[129] In May 1928, it was reported that the *satyagraha* was gaining ground and many Congress members had resigned from the Bombay Provincial Council in support of the agitating peasants of Bardoli.[130] In an editorial in the *Samaj*, Gopabandhu Das described the Bardoli *Satyagraha* as the beginning of the end of the British rule in India. The victory of the Bardoli peasants would amount to the victory of India over the British rule. "Bardoli" was not a regional, but an "all India issue". It would decide the "future of India".[131]

While appealing to the people for funds, Gopabandhu wrote that the Bardoli *Satyagraha* was strong because of the "inner strength of the people there". People from different parts of Gujarat were liberally helping the movement. "If the whole country comes forward with help, their strength will further rise". The British government would think "twice" before taking any harsh action against them. Whether the Bardoli people needed such help or not was immaterial. "Every Indian should extend help" to the people there. Gopabandhu made a special appeal to the people of Orissa because similar agrarian conditions prevailed in Orissa and the people (in Orissa) had taken help from others on many occasions in the past. "Bardoli" provided them with the opportunity to repay the debt and to share the national responsibility. He assured that even a small amount of money from the poverty-stricken people of Orissa would do because it was not the quantity of help, but the concern for the cause that was more important.[132]

The UPCC constituted a "Bardoli Fund" and Gopabandhu Das, probably writing his last article before his untimely death on 17 June 1928, appealed to the people to contribute to it. Acknowledging the receipt of some monetary contributions from Iram village in the Balasore district, he said, generation of such fellow feeling in all parts of Orissa would amount to the fulfilment of national life

[129] *Asha*, 20 February 1928.
[130] *Asha*, 21 May 1928.
[131] *Samaj*, 23 May 1928.
[132] *Ibid*.

in the state. Mutual help at the time of exigencies was a great quality of humanity and nationalism. He also asked the people to observe Bardoli Day on 12 June and to regularly organize meetings and discussions on the issue everywhere in Orissa. “Where it cannot be observed on that day [12 June], decide other days for such observances. This is how national life could be regenerated”, he said. Gopabandhu also promised to give wide coverage to the agitation in Orissa in response to the *satyagraha* in Bardoli in the *Samaj*.[133] However, before doing much in this regard, he passed away on 17 June 1928 after a brief illness and hectic journey to Lahore and then to Calcutta in the same month.[134]

When the news about Bardoli spread, Congressmen in Orissa made preparations to start a similar kind of no-rent agitation in Khurda. Like Bardoli, Khurda was a nationalist base since the non-cooperation days. The nationalists discovered many other similarities between the two regions: (*a*) Both had been put under the *khasmahal* (direct administration) of the government; (*b*) Village officers (known as *sarbarakar*s in Orissa) collected revenue in both the places on a commission basis. By and large, they had been deprived of their traditional tenancy and other rights and, consequently, had been the main base of the anti-government risings; (*c*) Like Bardoli, Khurda witnessed a revenue hike in the revenue settlement of 1923. Added to that there was a fresh proposal for a two anna revenue hike per rupee in 1927, unlike in other parts of Orissa; (*d*) While the rest of Orissa had a 30-year land revenue settlement, Khurda had to be content with a 15-year settlement. As a result, Khurda was settled five times between 1837 and 1923, whereas the rest of Orissa only twice during the period. Khurda had been even settled in 1867 when the rest of India was exempted due to the great famine of 1866. Similarly, while the rest of the Bombay Province had 30 years of revenue settlement, Bardoli taluka had a 20-year settlement; (*e*) The average size of land holding in Khurda was 1.5 acres, whereas in the rest of Orissa it was 3.23 acres. Because of the differences in revenue demands between

[133] *Samaj*, 13 June 1928.
[134] Sriramchandra Dash, Gopabandhu das (Oriya Biography), New Delhi, 1994, p 103.

Bardoli and the rest of the Bombay Presidency, the burden on the former being heavier, Congressmen could launch the agitation there; the Orissa leaders also hoped to do so in Khurda.[135]

However, there were many differences between Bardoli and Khurda that deterred the Orissa leaders from replicating the Bardoli agitation in Khurda. The taluka of Bardoli was smaller than the Khurda sub-division in size. The population of the former was only 90,000, while that of Khurda crossed 350,000 in 1928, as the nationalists observed. Second, the land in Bardoli was fertile and the economic conditions of the local people quite good—a necessary condition to sustain a mass movement. But in Khurda, the land was not fertile and the people were generally very poor.[136] The *Asha* lamented that "though many people are equating Khurda with Bardoli" (the conditions were similar and the coercion of the ryots in both the places by the government was of similar type), the Bardoli peasants were on to the alternative of civil disobedience for the redressal of their grievances, while the Khurda peasants were poor and dependent. They lacked the inner strength to protest. Hence, they tolerated all oppressions like lifeless creatures. "Probably this is the only difference between the peasants of Khurda and Bardoli", the paper commented.[137]

In their enthusiasm to replicate the Bardoli *Satyagraha* in Orissa, instead of taking the whole of the Khurda sub-division, they concentrated in Pichukoli, a small part of the sub-division, for launching the agitation. Godavarish Mishra, the Congress member in the B&O Provincial Council from Khurda, was its main leader.[138]

The immediate cause of peasant resentment in Khurda was the fresh proposal of a two anna hike of revenue per rupee in 1927. On 27 October 1927, one Ryot Association was formed at Khurda and a memorandum was submitted to the government against the proposal.[139] The government, on the other hand, set up registration

[135] *Samaj*, 15 August 1928; Godavarish Mishra, 9 March 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVII, pp. 430–31.
[136] *Samaj*, 15 August 1928.
[137] *Asha*, 20 February 1928.
[138] *Ibid*.
[139] Lingaraj Mishra, 21 February 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVII, p. 291.

camps where the peasants were asked to register contracts and thereby to accept the enhancement.

The Ryot Association held meetings and appealed to the people to boycott the camps.[140] The boycott movement was effective in Pichukoli, 16 miles away from Khurda. On 12 December 1927, the registration camp was opened in the village only to witness an en masse boycott. On 10 December, Mahatma Gandhi had just passed by the spot and had advised people to fear no one except God. Gandhi's visit had a strong impact on the local people. Unwilling to sign the contract, as a way out, the peasants deemed it better to "hide" themselves at home. The sub-divisional officer and other officials went to the houses of some wealthy peasants like Prabhakar Kar and Sanatan Rath in the village, "banged" their doors, dragged them out and "forced" them to sign the supposedly "voluntary" contract. Several peasants were called to the police station and threatened. Following this, many others signed the contracts. In another nearby village, the villagers were threatened and, when that did not work, prosecutions were started and false cases of land encroachment filed by the registration officer against a number of "wealthy men" who were also the leaders of the boycott.[141]

On 12 January 1928, realizing that the movement could not be sustained for long, Godavarish Mishra and five other local Congress leaders met the District Collector of Puri and argued for only a six paise hike (in place of two anna) per rupee and for a 30-year settlement (in place of the 15-year settlement), as in the rest of Orissa. If the government agreed to their proposal, they promised to request the peasantry to sign the contract. The collector, however, disagreed and issued a fresh notice saying that if the people did not sign the contract latest by 31 March 1928, the enhancement might rise to more than two anna per rupee.

The Congress retaliated against this when a protest meeting was held at Khurda on 27 January 1928. Amongst others, Dukhishyam

[140] Godavarish Mishra, 9 March 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVII, p. 440.
[141] Godavarish Mishra, 9 March 1928, *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVII, pp. 441–42; *Asha*, 20 February 1928.

Das, a local leader and an organizer of the famous Bolgarh Congress of November 1925, addressed the meeting.[142] The Khurda no-revenue hike campaign, however, could not be sustained for long. By February 1928, the people could not withstand the official pressure and signed the contract. The main cause of the failure of the movement was its confinement to Pichukoli alone, observed the Congress leaders. Other parts of Khurda did not join it. Many *sarbarkar*s were dismissed and the comparatively rich peasants were prosecuted on false charges. When these supporters of the movement were singled out, there was no follow-up measure, except for some debates and speeches in the Provincial Council by the Congress members and reporting in the nationalist press.[143]

The news of the Bardoli *Satyagraha* inspired the tribals and peasants in some princely states like Bamanda, Nilagiri and Kujang to start campaigns against rent hikes. "Bardoli" helped them to express their resentment in the form of no-rent campaigns and other organized movements.

In Bamanda, a native state adjoining Sambalpur, the Meefar Settlement (1923) had enhanced the revenue demand. Dayanand Satpathy, a primary school teacher and a local and unofficial correspondent of the *Asha*, the weekly published from Berhampur, brought the news of Bardoli to the state. As in the case of Khurda, the *gauntia*s who collected rent in the villages on behalf of the native state and were relatively well-off, led the peasants against the hike. Sometime in early 1928, many *gauntia*s such as Hara Pradhan, Bhagabatia Pradhan, Jagannath Garnaik, Daitari Hota and Bhagaban Patel led a demonstration of nearly 4,000 peasants towards the political agent's bungalow at Sambalpur to demand redress.[144] A no-rent campaign was launched after their failure to secure redressal to their grievances. Consequently, six *gauntia*s were arrested and four were deprived of their *gaunti* rights. Dayanand Satpathy was dismissed from service and declared out of bounds

[142] *B&O LCP*, Vol. XVII, pp. 443–46.
[143] *Ibid*., *Samaj*, 15 August and 19 September 1928; *Asha*, 20 February 1928.
[144] *Report of the Enquiry Committee*, *Orissa State—1939* (hereafter *RECOS*), Cuttack, 1939, p. 6.

from the state. Along with five others, he was also "gagged" for as long as he lived in the state.[145] Thus, very soon the movement was ruthlessly suppressed in Bamanda.

Since the beginning of January 1928, Nilagiri, a small native state adjoining Balasore, witnessed a peasant uprising against rent hike as well as against the unexpected increase in unpaid forms of labour like *bethi* and *rasad.* The custom of unpaid labour had existed for a long time, but then it was customary and not very taxing. During the British rule, the rise in unpaid labour crossed all limits, for the native princes undertook various developmental works like construction of roads, canals and buildings using unpaid labour.[146] Specifically in Nilagiri, which had a large elephant population in the local jungles, *bethi* was forced to help catch the elephants. One member from each family had to join the hunters and help in the formation of traps to assist the hunters in catching elephants. With the rise in the market value of tusks, catching elephants became a profitable business for the prince and so its frequency increased. Furthermore, the operation could only begin during harvest time when elephants could be easily located in the foothills. Agriculture suffered greatly due to such operations.[147] During 1927 alone, in Nilagiri there were four elephant-catching operations, each operation lasting for several days. Moreover, due to erratic firing by the hunters, not less than 20 peasants were killed in 1927.[148] Besides, the *gadjat* demanded *bethi* from its subjects for 15 days continuously and *rasad* (free supply) of various household items in early February 1928 on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of the prince's daughter. Unlike in earlier times, the demand had increased manifold to make the marriage ceremony very lavish.[149]

After the spread of the news of agitation against illegal revenue demands in other parts of the country (Bardoli), the Nilagiri peasants sent telegrams to the political agent and to C.F. Andrews, the

[145] *Ibid.*
[146] K. Mojumdar, "The Ganjam Agency", p. 150.
[147] *RECOS*, pp. 67, 86.
[148] *Samaj*, 22 February 1928.
[149] *Ibid.*

European social activist known for his Gandhian relief work, and formed a *sabha* called *Nilagiri Prapidit Praja Sabha* (Nilagiri Oppressed People's Sabha); they also started fleeing to nearby Balasore from 3 February 1928 to escape *gadjat* oppression. In a few days, the number of Nilagiri migrants increased to nearly 2,000.[150]

On 13 February 1928, C.F. Andrews visited the Nilagiri refugee camp at Balasore. Around the same time, the *Prajatantra*, published by Harekrishna Mahatab, brought out a booklet highlighting the oppression in Nilagiri (*Nilagiri Atyachar*), and the Balasore Congress workers provided shelter to the refugees.[151] The *Samaj*, while highlighting the issue, lamented that a popular movement all over Orissa was not forthcoming in support of the oppressed peasants of Nilagiri.[152] Referring to the oppression as described in the booklet, *Nilagiri Atyachar*, Gopabandhu Das wrote on 22 February 1928:

> How long human beings could tolerate such situations? Even after toiling for the entire year, day in and day out, when one is unable to feed oneself properly, how could he survive by working 20 days in a month on *bethi*? He would eat from his pocket; work on *bethi;* would be beaten up on the slightest pretext; his life and property is not safe in the state. The women are insecure. Every now and then a new tax is imposed; *magana* [free-supply like *rasad*] is demanded; a *praja* is beaten up; his house is looted. If the ruler turns to be a looter and eater, what course is left to the *praja*? Is there any semblance of law in such a state? This is sheer anarchy. The Imperial British rule is chiefly responsible for it. However, the princes of the states do not realize that, by indulging in such oppression against their *praja*s, they cause harm to themselves. The time has changed. The rulers no more enjoy the unbridled authority, unlike in the past. So many empires have fallen in the world. The peasants are no longer ready to tolerate such oppression. They are rising everywhere. The rulers must amend their

[150] *Ibid*.; *RECOS*, p. 7.
[151] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe*, p. 121; *Samaj*, 22 February 1928.
[152] *Samaj*, 29 February 1928.

style. Today Indian administration is on a crossroad. With the change in Indian administration, change is inevitable in the states.[153]

Thus, with their limited resources, the Congress leaders and the local nationalist press tried to give the necessary backing to the Nilagiri Movement in 1928.

In Kujang, a large zamindari estate adjoining Cuttack, Narayan Birabar Samant, a Congress leader and a member of the B&O Council, in October 1928 organized the local fishermen to demand restoration of their traditional fishing rights. The zamindar, locally called *raja*, had taken away these rights and the fishermen were agitating on this issue for quite some time. The news about the Bardoli *Satyagraha* in August 1928 inspired Narayan to take up the issue two months later in October 1928.[154]

The people of the princely states had a very long and strong tradition of defiance of the authority and it would be too simplistic to attribute their protest movements in 1928 to Bardoli or to the local Congress leadership alone. Time and again they had been agitating against the undue demands of the states, which were unprecedented and appeared unjustifiable to them. They could not afford to be against *bethi* or *begari* or rent in the given situation, but what was not acceptable to them was its unprecedented growth in contemporary times. Hence, they agitated.

For example, in 1925 when the Congress movement was at a low ebb and there was no such news of "Bardoli", the ryots of the Talcher princely state formed an association called the *Saubhagya Samiti*, after the name of the crown prince, to bring social reforms and secretly planned to launch an anti-feudal agitation. The prince's name was purposefully used to avoid any confrontation with the state. But, very soon the state authorities came to know about the designs of the *Samiti*. As a result, the *Samiti* was banned and its funds, nearly Rs 1,000, confiscated by the *gadjat* police.[155] Since

[153] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 22 February 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 395–96.
[154] *Searchlight*, 4 November 1928.
[155] *RECOS*, p. 103.

1920, one Gati Mangaraj mobilized the ryots of Nayagarh. They (the ryots) sent a telegram to the political agent against the police excess in the *gadjat*. Gati was arrested soon and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for a long term. Soon after his release in 1927, Gati, the indomitable peasant leader, once again mobilized the ryots to collectively send a memorandum to the political agent against the rigorous forest laws. He also began a fast-unto-death before the office of the political agent for several days, only to be arrested and sent to jail once again.[156] Though Gati Mangaraj had been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress' ideals of non-violence, most likely he had no organizational relation either with the UPCC or with any Congress leader of the time. Dayanand Satpathy's (of Bamanda) relations (as a newsgiver of the *Asha*) with the Congress were also very notional.

All these were independent agitations which aimed at redressing the local grievances. Their objective was to achieve certain tolerable living conditions in the localities where they lived. They were ever ready for compromises and truce with the authority so that the living conditions become relatively tolerable. In such situations, the limited support they got from the Congress circle was greatly welcomed. In 1927 and 1928, awareness about the Bardoli peasant agitation against rent hike through the local Congress activists or through people who knew about the Congress and the contemporary political movements outside, convinced them that their local movements were fully justified and needed to be intensified in full spirit. In other words, despite the presence of a purely local leadership, the *gadjat* movements were no rival to the Congress movement or its leadership. In fact, the tribal and peasant movements in the native states and the Congress movement were interdependent and related to each other during this period. Their independent growth, which resulted from a relative lack of any formal organizational link with the Congress, in no way suggests that they were opposed or posed any challenge to the Congress movement in Orissa. After his dismissal from service, Dayanand became the DCC secretary in

[156] *RECOS*, pp. 120–21.

Sambalpur, Narayan Birabar Samant and Godavarish Mishra were Congress leaders since long.

While emphasizing the subtle connectivity between the Gandhian movement and the emerging *gadjat meli*s of the period, especially the Nilagiri agitation of early 1928, Gopabandhu Das wrote:

> These days the educated people [read political people] are virtually restrained from visiting the *gadjat*s. The princes have no faith in them. The court cases from the *gadjat*s do not come to the *Mughalbandi* [British Orissa]. The political agent *saheb* is all in all there. No lawyer or *muktiyar* is consulted by him. How are the complaints of the *praja* settled between the rulers and the political agent is not known to others. Consequently, the subjects bear the repression up to a limit and revolt after that. What else could they do? It is good that until today the Nilagiri peasants have not been violent. They have fled away from the state. They still have hope of getting redressal from the authorities. It is good both for the state as well as the peasants. If not in any other way, the Gandhian non-violent non-cooperation method has unknowingly influenced them to adopt peaceful means of struggle. The Nilagiri agitation has amply demonstrated it.[157]

II.d

Industries and a modern labour force were nearly absent in Orissa in the 1920s. With the decline of traditional industries like the cotton industry, people migrated to Calcutta, Burma and Assam as unskilled labour and formed a distinct linguistic and cultural community there. In the late 1920s, when emphasis was laid on labour organization in the nationalist circle, the Orissa Congress leaders paid attention to this labour force for ameliorating its living conditions as well as for mobilizing it on various linguistic and political issues.

Gopabandhu Das regularly maintained contacts with the Oriya coolies in Calcutta. Soon after his release in June 1924, he visited

[157] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 22 February 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 394.

Calcutta and reorganized the Oriya Labour Union by calling a meeting on 10 August 1924. The Union, which was also the UPCC's branch at Calcutta, had been suspended since mid-1922.[158] After his visit in early June 1928, Gopabandhu lamented that the living conditions of Oriya coolies in Calcutta were very poor and argued that without any improvement in their living standards, political freedom would be of little meaning to them. He blamed the "beastly feeling" (in the sense of crudeness) of the labour force and the lack of concern of the middle class leaders for such an ugly state of life. Mobilization of these Oriyas outside and inculcation of a sense of self-respect among them should be two main objectives of the Orissa leaders, he suggested. Further "only sitting at Cuttack and Puri" and "weeping for the Orissan plight" were no remedies to these ills, he categorically pointed out in June 1928, just a few days before his death.[159] His deep concern for the Oriya coolies is demonstrated by the fact that he spent his last few days among them and addressed his last few meetings to them in Calcutta in June 1928.[160]

After Gopabandhu, Godavarish Mishra, Harekrishna Mahatab and Laxmi Narayan Sahu, a liberal turned Congressman (since the days of the boycott of the Simon Commission) were occasionally involved in the Oriya Labour Union in Calcutta in mid-1928 and 1929.[161] The Oriya coolies observed "Gopabandhu Day" at Calcutta on 19 September 1928. Godavarish Mishra from the UPCC attended it and addressed the gathering there. Some funds were collected for the UPCC on the occasion.[162] They also started a school for the children of the coolies, as reported in the *Asha* in January 1929.[163]

The efforts to organize the coolies soon bore some fruits when the Calcutta Oriya Samaj mobilized some 10,000 coolies to join the *hartal* on the occasion of the second phase of the Simon Commission boycott on 12 January 1929.[164] During the Calcutta

[158] *UD*, 16 August 1924.
[159] *Asha*, 11 June 1928.
[160] *Samaj*, 6 June 1928; *UD*, 23 June 1928.
[161] *Searchlight*, 17 May 1929; *Asha*, 24 September 1928; *Asha*, 28 January 1929.
[162] *Asha*, 24 September 1928.
[163] *Asha*, 28 January 1929.
[164] *Asha*, 21 January 1929.

Congress in December 1929, the UPCC's demand to include the Orissa union issue in the agenda was strongly backed by the coolies. The Orissa contingent of 300 delegates threatened to boycott the Congress if the issue was not included. Finally, when Pattabhi Sitaramayya met them and conveyed that the issue would be incorporated, Nilakantha Das representing the Orissa delegates, assured their full participation in the Congress session.[165] At the end of the day, the Orissa delegates and the Oriya coolies together celebrated the occasion by holding a public meeting in Calcutta on 29 December 1929. Attended by more than 10,000 coolies and 300 delegates, and presided over by Gopabandhu Choudhury, the meeting articulated its resolve for a separate linguistic province and expressed its full faith in the Congress-led struggle for national freedom.[166]

Due to the mobilization of the coolies, the Orissa contingent, both as delegates as well as audience in the Calcutta Congress, had numerically become very strong, which "gave Orissa a better status" than it had earlier. "Despite being poor and defenseless, the Orissa people have fully integrated in the all India ideal" of the Congress and "thereby deserve more attention from other provinces", remarked the *Asha*.[167] The "status" of the UPCC had been possible because of the active participation of the Oriya coolies. It once again proved that regional and national issues were equally important and mutually inseparable from each other. The neglect of one would automatically affect the other.

Besides, the UPCC also had some following among the employees of the Bengal Nagpur Railways (BNR) in Orissa. This was demonstrated by the fact that Gopabandhu Das addressed a meeting of BNR employees at Jatani in Puri district on 19 February 1927. Following the meeting, the railway employees went on a local strike demanding improvement in the general working conditions there. In a move to break the strike, the Puri magistrate imposed Section 144 under CrPC on Gopabandhu on 28 February 1927.[168]

[165] *Asha*, 7 January 1929.
[166] *UD*, 12 January 1929.
[167] *Asha*, 31 December 1928.
[168] *Searchlight*, 11 March 1927.

Apart from these few cases, the UPCC did not seem to have any contact with the labour force in or outside of Orissa. The migrant Oriya coolies in Assam and in Burma were also not in touch with it, which probably was a great limitation of the Congress movement in Orissa during the period.

II.e

The rise of student and youth groups was a noticeable feature of Indian politics in the latter half of the 1920s. A large number of youth conferences were organized all over the country during 1928 and 1929. There the speakers often advocated radical solutions for the political, economic and social ills from which the country was suffering.[169]

In Orissa, after the NCM, the first attempt to mobilize the students was made in 1924. Jadumani Mangaraj and some other youth leaders of the Congress took the initiative to hold a students' conference under the banner of one All Orissa Students' Conference alongside the Congress-led Provincial Conference in June 1924.[170] Godavarish Mishra, a senior Swarajist leader and a member of the B&O Council was its president designate. However, the conference was cancelled at the last moment because the police objected to the participation of some students who were known for their leanings towards the Congress.[171]

In February 1925, once again efforts were made to organize district-level student conferences. For this, permission was sought for suitable venues from school inspectors of the respective districts. The permission could not be obtained in Sambalpur and Puri districts,[172] while in other districts like Balasore and Cuttack, after obtaining the necessary permission, preparations were made to hold the conferences on 21 and 22 February 1925.[173] In Ganjam, as per a press release, the conference was to be held sometime in April

[169] Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle*, p. 297.
[170] *UD*, 22 March 1924.
[171] *Searchlight*, 27 August 1924.
[172] *UD*, 28 February 1925.
[173] *UD*, 14 February and 21 February 1925.

1925.[174] Two years later, the All Orissa Students' Conference was held at Cuttack on 15 and 16 January 1927. Madhusudan Das, Bhikari Charan Patnaik (a liberal lawyer and dramatist) and the Principal of Ravenshaw College addressed the students on the occasion.[175]

Till the beginning of 1927, the student movement was not directly affiliated to the Congress. The student conferences were broad platforms for students of all varieties. School fields were used for holding the meetings and the headmasters and college principals were often invited to speak on the occasion. When permission to hold meetings was denied by the school authorities, the sessions had to be cancelled. The resolutions passed during the conferences would further illustrate the broad nature of the movement. The Cuttack Conference in February 1925 passed the following resolutions. There would be: (*a*) mutual help among the students at the time of exigencies, (*b*) efforts to improve the health and sanitary conditions in the villages, (*c*) efforts to establish more libraries and study centres, and (*d*) efforts to form volunteer corps to maintain discipline during different sports competitions.[176] Likewise, the Balasore Student Conference planned to pass resolutions to look into local health and sanitary conditions and to establish more libraries for students.[177] Though underneath the resolutions contained Gandhian constructive ideals like village reconstruction, they were not overtly identified with the Congress party.

In 1928 and 1929, however, the scene changed. Several youth leagues, called the *Yubak Sangh*, were formed at the district and state levels under the auspices of the Congress. In the district conferences of the Congress Party, resolutions were passed to that effect. For example, as per the decision of the Cuttack District Conference of the Congress held at Kenduapatna on 8 and 9 April 1928, a press release was given to constitute the District Youth League at Salepur on 14 June 1928.[178] The Puri Conference held

[174] *UD*, 28 February 1925.
[175] *UD*, 22 January 1927; *Asha*, 27 December 1926.
[176] *UD*, 28 February 1925.
[177] *UD*, 21 February 1925.
[178] *UD*, 26 May 1928.

on 19 and 20 April 1928 took a similar decision and made appeals to students and the youth to join the District *Yubak Sangh* in large numbers.[179] After the passing away of Gopabandhu Das, who was seen as the founder of youth movements in the state, for he had started a *Yubak Sangh* for coordinating flood relief work way back in 1907,[180] the UPCC observed Gopabandhu Day all over the state and, as a tribute to the great leader, formed the Orissa Youth League (called the *Nikhila Utkal Yubak Sangh*) at Cuttack on 28 June 1928 the twelfth day (*shraddh* day) of his death.[181] The League was headed by Bansidhar Mishra and Rajkrishna Bose, two youth leaders of the UPCC. While Bansidhar Mishra held the position of secretary of the Cuttack DCC, Rajkrishna Bose was the UPCC secretary during the period. The growing strength of the league could be demonstrated by the fact that it looked for an independent building for its state office and a printing press for bringing out its organ, the *Yubak*, in September 1928.[182] Bhubaneswar Rath and Anand Das were two other leaders of the League.[183] The All Orissa Students' Conference and the Youth League together held their annual session at Balasore on 13 and 14 October 1928.[184]

In 1929, there were reports about the formation of many more new units of the League in different parts of the state. The decisions taken in the Ganjam Youth League gave a feel of the general environment of the League then. Held in May 1929, the Ganjam League decided (*a*) to expand the League's activities in the district, (*b*) to collect funds for the "Gopabandhu (Das) *Smriti Panthi*", created by the UPCC in memory of Gopabandhu Das, (*c*) to give physical training to the youth and (*d*) to constitute an executive committee for coordinating the League's activities.[185] In September 1929, preparations were made to hold the All Orissa Students' Conference from 20 to 22 October 1929.[186]

[179] *UD*, 5 May 1928.
[180] *Asha*, 3 June 1929.
[181] *UD*, 30 June 1928.
[182] *UD*, 29 September 1928.
[183] *Asha*, 29 October 1928.
[184] *Searchlight*, 19 October 1928.
[185] *Asha*, 27 May 1929.
[186] *Asha*, 30 September 1929.

The Youth Leaguers' appeals to the general mass of youth illustrated their broad vision of life and society. Written in the form of poetry and published in the nationalist press, some of those appeals were as follows: One Debendra, described as a "youth poet" wrote in his poem, *Agnimantre Diksha*:

> In the struggle of [our] great India, many soldiers are required oh youth of the world!
> Come on,
> We shall overcome.
> We shall make use of our Allah given blood,
> Since today we shall use only *swadeshi*;
> Boycott the foreign comforts.
> Oppressed and exploited as we are
> We have nothing to lose,
> Jump into the struggle…
> There is no time for debate
> It is time for action and action alone.[187]

In another poem, the *Biswasevak*, "which deserves to be read by every child in Orissa"[188], Birakishor Das, a young leader of the Congress wrote:

> We wish a world full of peace,
> We wish no war,
> We are the volunteers of the world.
> Our duty is to serve the humanity without any break.
> We are the brave children of India.
> We shall overcome someday.[189]

It was clear that the youth leagues looked beyond the political frontiers of a nation. They wished to "shed blood" and serve the world community as a whole. However, they were neither oblivious

[187] Published in the *Asha*, 29 April 1929.
[188] *Asha*, 27 May 1929.
[189] *Ibid.*

of the colonial exploitation in India, nor unaware of their identity as the "children of India". It was this sense of international understanding that made their movement unique during the period. Further, the youth leagues, whose activities did not go beyond the limits of the Congress and the district towns of the state, grew by taking help from the Congress, rather than by posing any challenge to the existing nationalist leadership during the period. In fact, Gopabandhu Das, who founded the UPCC in 1920, was also the founder leader of the youth movements in Orissa since 1907. As a tribute to him, after his death, the Orissa chapter of the league was launched on 28 June 1928, the day of his *shraddh*. The League collected funds for the organization in his name. Second, as argued earlier, the Congress in Orissa was a party of the youth. Born in 1877, Gopabandhu Das was probably its oldest leader. Thus, Rajkrishna Bose was simultaneously the youth league leader as well as the secretary of the UPCC. On his election to the post of secretary, the *Asha*, edited by Sashi Bhusan Rath, an "old guard" of the Congress, was overwhelmed with joy, because the activities of the Congress would "henceforth" expand under his "dynamic" leadership.[190]

While welcoming the ensuing youth conference scheduled to be held in Calcutta in "December 1928", the *Asha* optimistically noted, "we look forward to the success of the conference, which on the one hand would lead India to freedom and, on the other hand, help in the growth of world citizens".[191] Similarly, Nanda Kishor Mishra, a Congress leader, wished to see the youth leagues in all parts of Orissa for "in this hour of national crises, only through the awakening of and consistent efforts by the youth could the nation prosper. Only the youth could give a radical solution whether the problem may be related to social reforms or to village re-construction. Only he could throw the age-old social oppression and evils into the dustbin".[192]

[190] *Asha*, 8 April 1929.
[191] *Asha*, 19 November 1928.
[192] *Asha*, 29 October 1928.

A fortnight before his death, Gopabandhu Das wrote that though some people had doubts about the prospect of national awakening in Orissa, the situation was not so bad. "The youth of Orissa cannot always remain lifeless and unpatriotic. Due to utter poverty and oppression they are suppressed today, but not dead. A clarion call would surely awaken them one day", he concluded. "The whole nation is calling you [the youth of Utkal]. Respond to it in an appropriate manner", Gopabandhu Das reminded the youth before his death.[193]

It was because of such unflinching faith in the dynamic leadership of the youth, "who only needed to be a little more consistent in their actions"[194] that the "elders" did not feel threatened with the rise of the youth leagues in the state. In fact, their faith in the "youth" committed to the service of the nation had made them even empathetic to the young revolutionaries of the "Lahore Conspiracy Case" and the communists of the "Meerut Conspiracy Case". They wished these "young patriots" a very long life.[195] While reporting about the poor state of health of the "Lahore revolutionaries" who were on a fast unto death in jail, the *Asha* feared that "instead of tears, blood would roll down from the eyes [of the people] if their story is told".[196] It extended moral support to them in their fight for some tolerable living conditions for Indian prisoners. While justifying their agitations in jail, it described the growing discrimination between the white and black prisoners. "The white prisoner, despite being a thief or a dacoit or a cheater, is supplied with cheese, bread, milk, tea and coffee… but it is just the opposite for the Indian prisoner…. An Indian is not entitled to any 'white' food!"[197] Similarly, the *Asha* was overwhelmed with joy when it heard that the "Meerut prisoners" might be released.[198]

After the death of Jatin Das in Lahore jail, the UPCC held a public meeting at Cuttack. Presided over by Gopabandhu

[193] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 30 May 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, p. 417.
[194] *Asha*, 24 December 1928.
[195] *Asha*, 9 September 1929.
[196] *Asha*, 26 August, 1929.
[197] *Asha*, 16 September 1929.
[198] *Asha*, 8 April 1929.

Choudhury, the party president, the meeting passed a resolution which stated that, "this meeting feels proud in the valorous death of the young hero, Jatindranath Das, and condemns the government for its inhuman treatment to the political prisoners there".[199] In the meeting, Rajkrishna Bose, the Youth League leader and the UPCC secretary, went a step further and promised to avenge Jatin's death by organizing bonfires of foreign clothes all over the state.[200] In other words, there was no such apparent opposition to the youth leaders in the Congress Party, nor was there any overt hostility towards those young nationalists like the communists and revolutionaries who differed ideologically from mainstream Congressmen. Like the government, the nationalists portrayed themselves as a solid united front, irrespective of their internal and ideological differences, and this helped their movement to grow in the long run.

II.f

During his first visit, Mahatma Gandhi addressed a women's meeting at Cuttack on 24 March 1921. The total number of participants did not cross 40 and many of them were close relatives of the local Congress leaders. These women had probably come out of their houses for the first time to attend a political meeting. They might not have been able to do even this had "their" Congressmen at home not backed them. It was because of such a poor state of politicization among women that the NCM had such few women participants in Orissa.

However, the scene changed during the CDM. Quite a few women came to the forefront of the nationalist struggle in the state. Sarala Devi was jailed for six months for joining the Salt *Satyagraha* in 1930. Kuntala Kumari Sabat emerged as a prominent youth league leader at the national level. Her poem *Awhana* (March 1930), was confiscated by the government for its provocative (nationalistic) appeal to people. At Kujang, some 500 women joined the Salt March

[199] *Asha*, 30 September 1929.
[200] *Ibid.*

under the leadership of the local *rani*, Bhagyabati Devi, and her daughter, Ratnamala Jema. Other women participants of the Salt *Satyagraha* included Rama Devi, Malati Choudhury and Sarala Devi. While taking the Independence Day pledge on 26 January 1932, Rama Devi was arrested at the Choudhury Bazaar in Cuttack and went to jail with her newborn baby. Kiranbala Devi and two other women activists were arrested at Balubazaar in Cuttack. Similarly, Hiranmayee Devi, Janhabi Devi, Niramala Devi and Ashalata Devi were arrested for taking the pledge at Puri, Balasore, Sakhigopal and Jagatsinghpur respectively. Other women activists who were arrested during the CDM in 1932 included Kokila Devi, Kumudini Devi, Sunamani Devi, Radhamani Devi, Kahetramani Devi, Kausalya Devi, Maya Devi, Priyambada Devi, Harapriya Devi, Haramani Devi and Malati Devi.[201]

Such active participation by women in the CDM in Orissa was not a sudden development. It was the culmination of a process in which the women had been politicized in the 1920s. It dated back to 1922 when four women—Sarala Devi, Rama Devi, Padmavati Devi and Hiranmayee Devi—from Orissa attended the Congress session at Gaya.[202] In 1924, the first All Orissa Women's Conference was held alongside the UPCC conference at Cuttack on 29 June. The main organizers were Kishorimani Devi, Haimabati Devi, Sarala Devi and Rashamani Devi. In the meeting, while Kishorimani Devi proposed to affiliate their Orissa group with the All India Women's Conference, Haimabati Devi emphasized the imparting of education as an essential tool for women's development. Gopabandhu Das had been invited to address the participants in the conference.[203]

In 1925, the second conference was held at Cuttack and the organizers were Rashamani Devi, Sabitri Devi and Pitambari Devi.[204] On 10 March 1925, one *Mahila Bandhu Samiti* founded by Labanyamayee Devi, daughter of the liberal pleader, Gopal

[201] See, Gobardhan Dora, *Thesaurus of Events and Dates of Orissa*, Bhubaneswar, 2003, pp. 365, 391, 397 and 398; Also see, P. Kar, *The Indian National Congress*, p. 174.
[202] Rama Devi, *Mo Jibana Pathe*; Gobardhan Dora, *Thesaurus*, p. 372.
[203] *UD*, 12 July 1924; Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VII, p. 165.
[204] *Asha*, 21 September 1925.

Chandra Praharraj, held a meeting at Puri and conferred the title of *Utkal Bharati* on Kuntala Kumari Sabat for her outstanding social and literary work.[205] There is no news about any women's conference in 1926 and 1927. Many women's conferences were held once again in 1928[206] (at Puri on 8 September and at Kakatpur on 11 April 1928) and 1929 (at Balasore in March and at Kendrapada on 18 and 19 May 1929).[207] Resolutions were passed to develop more avenues for the spread of education among women and to take steps to stop child marriage and to promote widow remarriage. Even a political resolution supporting the Congress and its proposed civil disobedience programme was passed in 1929.[208]

Besides the holding of conferences, a committee was formed for the rehabilitation of prostitutes in early October 1928. The members were Janhavi Devi, Manorama Devi, Nishibala Naik, Rashpriya Devi and Kokila Devi.[209] In 1929, many writings on the issue of women's development were published in the press by Sarala Devi. In one such writing she broadened the meaning of the term Oriya woman and argued that it should not be limited to the Hindus alone. "There are also Brahmo, Christian and others among the women in Orissa". She also described education as a necessary tool for the development of women in Orissa.[210]

While discussing the women's issue, the *Asha* pointed out that women's problems could not be solved only by holding conferences. "They must come out of the four walls of the house and live as an earning member of the family", which would give them equality with the menfolk. It would also help the country to overcome the problem of food scarcity in the coming days. The paper concluded that the woman, including the widow, was neglected in society, because she had not been made capable of earning her own livelihood.[211]

[205] Dora, *Thesaurus*, p. 366.
[206] *UD*, 22 September 1928; *Asha*, 9 April 1928.
[207] *UD*, 6 April 1929.
[208] *UD*, 1 June 1929.
[209] *UD*, 6 October 1928.
[210] *Asha*, 29 April 1929.
[211] *Asha*, 7 January 1929.

The women's movement at this stage was largely confined to the urban middle classes. Barring Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, it had not even reached other urban centres of the state. The women who were taking part in these activities were mostly the wives and daughters of some nationalist leaders and lawyers. If Rama Devi was Gopbandhu Choudhury's wife, Lavanyamayee Devi was Gopal Chandra Praharaj's daughter, Chanchala Devi was Jagabandhu Singh's wife and Ashalata Devi was Atal Bihari Acharya's wife. The movement was a loose wing of the Congress and complemented the nationalist activities. Its conferences, the main form of activities, were held alongside the annual sessions of the Congress, for "the women would not be able to make the necessary arrangement [for holding meetings] themselves".[212] This probably demonstrated the gender (over) dependence which was deep-rooted in society in Orissa. However, despite the weaknesses, these limited activities, which are explained as a "movement", were the key without which, probably, greater participation of women in political life might not have been easy in the future, that is, in the CDM and later.

II.g

The emergence of "low" caste movements was a significant development of Orissa politics during the 1920s. On the one hand, it helped in the change of perception about caste and, on the other hand, it led to the radicalization of the national movement in the state.

In Orissa, some of the caste names that are treated as socially "low" and "untouchable" are *Bauri*, *Pana*, *Doma*, *Kandara*, *Hadi*, *Ganda*, *Ghasi* and *Mochi*. Even suffixing them to a proper name would be considered "degrading" in the local society. Besides, there are castes like *Gauda* and *Teli* that are considered "low", but not as "untouchables" in the social hierarchy. Protest movements against caste repression as well as for social elevation by people belonging

[212] Sarala Devi quoted in the *Asha*, 13 May 1929.

to these castes were not new in the local history.[213] However, during the period under study, two main changes were witnessed in the movement. One, most of these movements grew under the leadership of caste Hindu Congressmen. The leaders were not "low" caste themselves, but showed interest in the movement. Thus, Sashi Bhusan Rath, Jaymangal Rath, Sarat Chandra Mahapatra, Laxmi Narayan Sahu, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Rama Devi and the like, whose names appeared as champions of "low" caste movements, belonged to the upper castes. Under the Gandhian constructive programme, these individual Congressmen took up the campaign against untouchability, the main aspect of the caste issue, integrated it with the campaign for prohibition (for it was suspected that the "low" caste people were "confirmed" liquor addicts) and tried to elevate the status of the "low" castes in the social sphere. For achieving this, they tried to impart education and proposed to the "low" castes that they change their food habits (not eat the carcasses of cows) and to plant *tulsi* in front of their houses so as to be redeemed from untouchability. Simultaneously, they also blamed the Hindus (caste Hindus) for perpetuating and perpetrating untouchability, which was against civilization. They accused many Congressmen of not taking up the issue of the removal of untouchability seriously and sincerely.

The second aspect of change, which became prominent from 1927 onwards, was in the sphere of leadership. Without any overt challenge to the Congress reformers for their caste Hindu identity, people from the "low" castes started to lead their movement. During the period, what was apparent was a kind of complementary relationship between the caste Hindu reformers and the "low" caste leadership, which consequently radicalized the Congress and the anti-untouchability and other "low" caste movements in the subsequent period, that is, in the early 1930s.

In June 1924, the UPCC passed a resolution, which stated that people from the "low" castes should be allowed into schools and

[213] For details see Basant Kumar Mallik, *Paradigms of Dissent and Protest*: *Social Movements in Eastern India*: *1400–1700 A.D.*, New Delhi, 2004; A.C. Pradhan, *The Emergence of Depressed Classes*, Bhubaneswar, 1986.

temples. As a part of the Congress campaign against untouchability, a common dinner was served at the Congress conference in which people, irrespective of their castes, sat together and ate food. Though there was no instance of any "untouchable" persons being present among the delegates in the session, this measure of the Congress was highlighted as a great step against casteism in the local nationalist press.[214] Similarly, in early November 1923 at Berhampur, where the local people were up against the Congress' anti-untouchability campaign, Nilakantha Das argued fervently against untouchability and "literally silenced" the agitators.[215] In July 1925, the *Asha* pointed out that the practice of untouchability must be put to an end at least in the greater interest of the Hindus.[216] While addressing a *Hadi Sabha* organized by Jay Mangal Rath at Berhampur on 18 April 1924, Niranjan Patnaik "suggested" to the audience that they give up drinking liquor, eating carcasses of cows and stealing. The volunteers in the Vaikam Temple entry agitation (Kerala) were profusely congratulated for their participation. It was also reported that the *Hadi*s would be allowed to sit on the verandah of the Berhampur Gopinath Temple (entry was still not allowed!) and to go up to the *simhadwar* (entry gate) of the Sargarh Fort. The permission, which had been obtained through negotiations by Congress reformers (like Jay Mangal Rath) was highlighted as a great victory for the movement against untouchability.[217] The *UD* wrote that untouchability as a social practice existed nowhere except in India and it stunted the growth of India in all respects.[218]

Not satisfied with such "leap services" of the Congress, a small section within the party took up the issue more seriously and criticized the majority of the Congressmen for their failure to create any real impact in society. Its near revolt against the caste Hindus for perpetuating the practice of untouchability and vehement criticism against other Congressmen for their lack of sincerity

[214] *UD*, 12 July 1924.
[215] *Asha*, 25 November 1923.
[216] *Asha*, 13 July 1925.
[217] *Asha*, 21 April 1924.
[218] *UD*, 18 June 1923.

towards the issue of the removal of untouchability brought the "low" castes' movements nearer to the nationalist-led anti-untouchability campaign during the period. One such "serious" Congressmen was Jay Mangal Rath from Ganjam, who asked those Congressmen having no faith in the campaign against untouchability to resign from the party "for *swaraj* would be meaningless, if untouchability was not eradicated". He proposed that the party should terminate the membership of such Congressmen. The campaign would be broad-based among the "low" castes only when a *satyagraha* was launched against caste oppression, he said pointedly in 1924.[219] He blamed "the Brahmins for the practice of untouchability"[220] and urged people belonging to all castes in India to integrate into a "broad Indian caste" (*Mahabharatiya Jati*) for the purpose of achieving *swaraj*.[221]

Sashi Bhusan Rath, who edited the *Asha*, and his brother Sarat Chandra Mahapatra were two other Congressmen devoted to the upliftment of *Dandasi* in Ganjam. Traditionally, the *Dandasi*s were considered a very "faithful" caste and were employed as guards for the purpose of safety and security. But the government had declared them as a denotified (criminal) tribe. This had lowered their status in the social sphere and motivated the Congressmen to take up the issue. The Congress leaders organized many *Dandasi Sabha*s where the government was asked to withdraw the said declaration and the *Dandasi*s took a collective pledge to give up the habit of drinking liquor and eating carcasses of cows.[222] In another meeting held in early September 1925, some 200 *Dandasis* took a collective pledge and became members of the *sabha* by paying "four anna each" to be redeemed from the government Act.[223] In a similar tone, the *Asha* reported that some 500 *Dandasi*s gathered in a meeting at Digapahandi on 15 June 1926. Presided over by Sashi Bhusan Rath,

[219] *Gadjat Basini*, 2 August 1924; *UD*, 26 July 1924.
[220] Quoted in the *Asha*, 10 March 1924.
[221] Quoted in the *Asha*, 3 May 1926.
[222] The first meeting was held on 15 September 1923 where the pledge was taken. *Asha*, 4 February 1924.
[223] *Asha*, 14 September 1925.

the *sabha* demanded the withdrawal of *Dandasi*s from the Criminal Tribe List.[224]

The nationalists' assumption that the victims could be redeemed from untouchability "if they wished", motivated the *Asha* to demand higher social status for the *Bauri*s. "They do not eat carcasses…. They are not untouchables by their actions…. They are called *Bhoi*s [and not Bauris] in Ganjam and are not treated as 'untouchables' in Parlakhemundi", it argued in June 1926.[225] In his reformatory zeal, Sarat Chandra Mahapatra organized a *Dandasi* meeting at Chandra Kaleswar Kota in Ganjam on 10 March 1925. Attended by some 500 *Dandasi*s, the meeting resolved (*a*) to hand over those caste men, who continued to live on theft, to the police, (*b*) to send their wards to schools compulsorily, and (*c*) to set up "night schools in the locality" to dissuade the *Dandasi*s from stealing.[226]

Laxmi Narayan Sahu, who suffixed *Pana* to his name as a mark of his identification with the "low" caste and worked in the *Pana* locality of Choudwar, set up a school for *Pana* children, for they were not taken care of in the general schools. In a *jatisabha* held at Kapileswar village in 1929, he motivated some 46 families belonging to the *Pana* community to agree to (*a*) give up the practice of eating carcasses, (*b*) plant *tulsi* in front of their houses and (*c*) recite the *Bhagabata* (the Oriya version of the Bhagavat Gita) in all community meetings.[227]

Besides this select group of nationalist reformers, other leaders of the Congress also got attracted to the issue when it contained some anti-government component. Thus, Godavarish Mishra and Rabindranath Majumdar attended the meeting of the *Hadi*s at Banapur in late August 1923. The *Hadi*s were protesting against the highhandedness of the district collector, who, during the Puri car festival, had "forced" those *hadi*s living in the nearby localities to work for cleaning of the pilgrim city. The *Hadi*s, who traditionally worked as sweepers, were unwilling to work in Puri during the

[224] *Asha*, 21 June 1926.
[225] *Asha*, 28 June 1926.
[226] *Asha*, 16 March 1925.
[227] *UD*, 5 October 1929; Also see, Laxmi Narayan Sahu, *Mo Barabula Jiban*.

overcrowded car festival because many of them suffered from various diseases on return. In the meeting, besides criticizing the collector, the *Hadi*s promised to abjure the drinking of liquor and eating of carcasses of cows and agreed to send their wards to schools.[228]

Despite agreeing to the nationalists' reform strategies for the "untouchables", some people suspected the sincerity of the general Congressmen with regard to the untouchability issue. This was demonstrated in a leaflet, which was being distributed in the Ganjam district, mostly in the weekly *haat*s, during April 1923. Ridiculed by the nationalist press for its erroneous language, the leaflet entitled "Who is a Hadi?" created great interest among the country people, reported the *Asha* in April 1923. The leaflet read:

> Tell us now who is a *Hadi*?
> Who is really a *Hadi*?
> You fight for *swaraj*, but hate your own men
> Oh "Great Hindus"!
> Who is a *Hadi*?
> Who is really a *Hadi*? …
> You touch the feet of Christians [British]
> Oh disciples of Krishna!
> Is it the essence of Hinduism?
> We are the children of Gandhi
> We shall bring *swaraj*
> We are the servants of Krishna,
> We shall bring victory to Hinduism.
> Our principle shall ultimately win.
> We shall serve the motherland.
> Then we shall explain the essence of Hinduism.
> Oh "Great Hindus",
> We shall teach you
> Who is a *Hadi*!
> Who is really a *Hadi*!! [229]

[228] *Asha*, 3 September 1923.
[229] The leaflet was produced in the *Asha*, 16 April 1923.

The leaflet, which simultaneously criticized the caste Hindus for practicing untouchability, the Congressmen for their insincerity to the cause and the British government for being anti-Hindu, probably reflected the mind of a "low" caste person of the time. From 1927 onwards, more such examples were witnessed which shared the "low" castes' perceptions about the issue.

In February 1927, Ramachandra Das, an educated young man from the *Bauri* community and 20 other "untouchables" demanded reservation for their community in the Cuttack District Board.[230] Before this, the same young man had written about the precarious condition of the special schools meant for the wards of "untouchables" and run by the local district board. He gave suggestions for their improvement. Following the complaint, the board appointed one Sridhar Samal, the first graduate from the "untouchable" community, to look into the functioning of the special schools.[231]

In the latter half of 1928, the *Pana*s had been reportedly mobilized in a similar fashion. A Hindu *sanyasi,* living on the borders of Balasore district and Keonjhar *gadjat,* preached that the caste system had been abolished and the dawn of *swaraj* and the end of British rule were fast approaching. Very soon a large number of *Pana*s took him as their guru. Matters came to a head when the *Pana*s assaulted a Brahmin for not acknowledging the divinity of the hermit. This led to a virtual fight between the *Pana*s and the Brahmins in many villages on both sides of the border. In the resultant clash and looting, four police cases were registered in Balasore and six cases in Keonjhar.[232]

In 1929 and 1930, the *Gauda*s, who were never treated as "untouchables", also held caste conferences and passed many resolutions without any initiative from the Congressmen. On 18 and 19 July 1929, they met at Bhadrak and unanimously decided to (*a*) wear the sacred thread for "Brahmanizing" themselves, (*b*) renounce the practice of child marriage, (*c*) renounce the practice

[230] *UD*, 26 February 1927.
[231] *UD*, 13 June 1925.
[232] FRBO, File No. 1 of 1928, October, *Home Poll*.

of carrying *palki*s and (*d*) not consider the *Pana*s, *Kandara*s, *Matia*s and *Kahar*s "untouchables" so that people from these castes could be employed to carry *palki*s.[233] The *Gauda*s held another conference at Soro (Balasore district) on 23 and 24 February 1930. Graced by the district Congress leaders like Harekrishna Mahatab, Nanda Kishor Das, Mukunda Prasad Das and Jagannath Das, the conference also urged the *Gauda*s to (*a*) renounce the practice of carrying *palki*s, (*b*) abjure from drinking liquor, (*c*) not practice untouchability against the *Kandara*s, *Bauri*s, *Kahar*s, *Matia*s, and the like so that the latter would be acceptable for carrying *palki*s, and (*d*) renounce the practice of child marriage. Subsequently, their refusal to carry the *palkis* of caste Hindus led to their social boycott by the latter.[234]

The "low" caste movements, whether they were led by people belonging to the same caste, or by a few enthusiastic Congressmen, aimed at elevating their social status, rather than at rooting out the caste system. There was no disagreement between both the sections with regard to the strategies, for they all believed in abjuring certain food and drink habits and in renouncing certain occupations, considered degrading by the caste Hindus. They proposed to remove untouchability by literally brahmanizing its victims. The caste organizations, which played a significant role in the movement, even proposed alternative means of living, for example, basket making in place of robbery.[235] Imparting education was also considered a prime means for achieving the desired social status. Despite criticizing certain sections of the Congress for their insincerity, the "low" caste leadership was not hostile to the Congress because of its agreement with the latter on the methods of work. Besides, it also found a small group of sincere Congressmen, who nearly revolted against other Congressmen as well as against the caste Hindus, to which those Congressmen belonged, for pursuing the Gandhian constructive programme. It

[233] The *Asha*, 5 August 1929.
[234] *UD*, 8 March 1930.
[235] The *jatisabha* of the *Panas* of Angul in February 1924 proposed "basket making" as an alternative means of living to "stealing" to its members for achieving the desired social status. See, the *UD*, 23 February 1924.

was the lack of sincerity on the part of a section of Congressmen to the Gandhian methods with regard to the removal of untouchability, and not the methods, which was criticized then. In other words, the constructive programme, especially the campaign and the campaigners against untouchability, worked as a bridge between the nationalist movement and the "low" caste movements in the late 1920s and thereafter.

II.h

In 1928 and 1929, the state unit of the Congress had grown organizationally and was gearing up for the forthcoming CDM. This was evident from the holding of party meetings and conferences both at the district and state levels on a regular basis. By January 1928, elaborate plans were made at the district units for holding annual sessions.[236] The state conference was to be held at Balasore in November 1928.[237] The Singhbhum and the Sambalpur district units, which had severed their relations during the post-non-cooperation days, revived their relationship with the UPCC. Anant Mishra from the Singhbhum unit had agreed to preside over the Puri Conference to be held at Kakatpur on 11 April 1928.[238] Laxmi Narayan Mishra from Sambalpur had attended the UPCC meeting at Cuttack on 14 January 1928.[239] There was emphasis on unity among the Congressmen everywhere.[240]

The *Asha* in an over-enthusiastic note reported about the elaborate arrangements being made for the forthcoming Calcutta Congress: "Never had there been such a massive hall with the seating capacity of over 15,000 people as in Calcutta. The speakers would be clearly audible to every person seated in the hall".[241] The UPCC, which had generated "new hopes" through its massive participation in Calcutta, invited the Congress to Orissa for its next session in

[236] *Asha*, 23 January 1928.
[237] *Asha*, 5 November 1928.
[238] *Asha*, 9 April 1928.
[239] *Asha*, 30 January 1928.
[240] *Asha*, 2 January 1928.
[241] *Asha*, 19 November 1928.

1929.[242] This demonstrated the growing strength of the party in the state.

In 1929, there was emphasis on the holding of public meetings by inviting leaders from other districts, membership drives and boycott in the DCCs at Balasore (18 March), Puri (22 and 23 June), Cuttack (end of August)[243] and Ganjam (10 February).[244] Earlier, the nationalist press had published a list of 32 "foreign" items meant for boycott by Congress members. The list included chemical items, a few medicines, some leather items, foreign cloth, salt, sugar, soap, bicycles and dolls.[245]

Bonfires of foreign clothes and celebration of the National Week from 6–13 April 1929 were two other main programmes. To coincide with Gandhi's trial, after his arrest in Calcutta on 26 March 1929, Gopabandhu Choudhury called the party workers to organize "bonfire" in all parts of Orissa.[246] The Balasore DCC (March 1929), while extending full support to the Congress programme of boycott, proposed to collect foreign clothes in a door-to-door campaign and to organize bonfires in public places to make the show conspicuous. It also decided to initiate picketing at a few selected places in the district.[247] There was a press release which stated that there would be a bonfire in the annual session of the UPCC at Balasore on 29 and 30 March 1929. Bonfires, henceforth, had become the main attraction of the Congress meetings.[248] Students were leading them. Local festivals like the *Dola Utsav* were becoming the venue for public bonfires accompanied by shouting of slogans like "Bande Mataram", "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai".[249]

While regretting that the local leaders could not hold a bonfire at Berhampur on 4 March 1929 to coincide with the bonfire in

[242] *Asha*, 31 December 1928.
[243] *Asha*, 18 March and July 1929.
[244] *Asha*, 25 February 1929.
[245] *Asha*, 16 July 1928.
[246] *Asha*, 11 March 1929.
[247] *Asha*, 18 March 1929.
[248] *Ibid.*
[249] *Asha*, 1 April 1929.

Calcutta, which had been led by Mahatma Gandhi,[250] the *Asha* defended the essentiality of the programme in an editorial on 1 April 1929:

> In order to kill the germs of plague, cholera and small pox, etc., the Health Department burns the clothes of patients who are affected by such diseases. Does any one object to it? Like the clothes of such patients which are devoid of any worth, the foreign clothes, which have sucked the blood of Indian people, are only fit for bonfire. Lancashire has made elaborate designs to destroy the Indian *swadeshi* cloth mills and, in lieu, to dump cheap foreign cloth in Indian market. [In such situations] we strongly feel that bonfire of foreign clothes is the only way left to the Indians to foil the government's sinister designs.[251]

From 6 to 13 April 1929, the UPCC made elaborate plans to observe the National Week in all parts of the state, for the first time since the NCM. The day-to-day detailed schedule of the proposed programme was sent to the DCCs for implementation. The programme was as follows:

6 April	:	Fasting, prayer for independence and public meeting in the evening.
7 April	:	To be observed as *Khadi* Day, exhibition of spinning, sale of *khadi* by Congress volunteers, collection of foreign cloth to be burnt in bonfires and public meeting in the evening.
8 April	:	Emphasis on membership drive, signature campaign on the independence pledge, *khadi* campaign and collection of foreign cloth for bonfires.
9 April	:	Membership drive, *khadi* campaign, collection of foreign cloth for bonfires.
10 April	:	To be observed as Youth Day, recruitment of volunteers, public meeting in the evening.

[250] *Asha*, 11 March 1929.
[251] *Asha*, 1 April 1929.

11 and 12 April	:	Recruitment of volunteers, sale of *khadi* and collection of foreign cloth.
13 April	:	To be observed as the Jalianwalabagh Day, collection of foreign cloth, bonfire and public meeting.[252]

The UPCC also gave a list of suggested topics for the public meetings to be held during the week. They were: removal of untouchability, prohibition, reforms among the women and *shramajivi* (labourers), village organization and reforms.[253] There were reports about the celebration of the National Week at Cuttack, Sambalpur, Jagatsinghpur and Kendrapada. Everywhere meetings were held, bonfires of foreign cloth organized and *khadi* sold.[254]

The enthusiasm was reflected in the growing number of bonfire cases, as in Puri,[255] and increasing sale of *khadi* in the state. Between October 1928 and March 1929, the sale of *khadi* had touched nearly Rs 50,000 in the *Utkal Khadi Board*. In April, the *Asha* wrote, "Everyday there are orders [for *khadi*] from the different districts and the *gadjats*; every week more and more number of school and college students are seen using *khadi*; new sale centres, both on individual and cooperative basis are being opened. If the trend continues like this the situation may greatly change in just another two months time".[256] In 1929, there were reports about counterfeit *khadi* being sold in the market which shows the growing popularity of *khadi* among the people. While warning against the use of such counterfeit *khadi*, which was cheap and posed a threat to the prospects of *khadi*, Rajkrishna Bose, the UPCC secretary, informed the people that "genuine *khadi* centres were functioning at Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Ganjam, Kendrapada, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Khurda" and purchases might be made from there.[257]

252 *Asha*, 8 April 1929.
253 *Asha*, 8 March 1929.
254 *Asha*, 15 April 1929 and 22 April 1929.
255 *Asha*, 3 June 1929.
256 *Asha*, 15 April 1929.
257 *Asha*, 3 June 1929.

However, not every nationalist leader would agree that the nationalist wave was on in 1928 and 1929. Gopabandhu Das, who did not foresee any course other than the mass movement as useful for achieving the nationalist goal, still saw a kind of passivity in public life in May 1928, but was sure that it would recede and be replaced by an emerging youth leadership in the state.[258] In September 1929, the *Asha* lamented that "Orissa was not equal to others in terms of participation" in the national movement.[259] Earlier, while confirming the passivity, it wrote:

> The passivity, which reigned since the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement has not yet receded fully. In such a situation it is doubtful how would the people take the movement being proposed to be launched on the model of Non-Cooperation Movement. An ordinary individual is not as determined as Mahatma Gandhi in his decision. However, it is a great relief that Gandhi would lead the movement once again. Whether it is within one year or five years, he would surely lead the nation to *swaraj*…. This makes the people really happy and hopeful. *Swaraj* may or may not be achieved within one year, but everybody must stick to the Gandhian principles and give the maximum to make it [the movement] a success."[260]

Through this the local leadership reposed its faith in Gandhian strategies and leadership. Simultaneously, it also cautioned Gandhi, the main leader, about the common follies, which the general participants might have, as in Chauri Chaura in 1922, so that the movement after being launched was not withdrawn midway. It also foretold the people about the possible duration of the movement so that they did not become impatient half-way through. Such realistic assessments of, and reporting about, the contemporary political developments aimed at overcoming some of the possible shortcomings of the movement to be launched thereafter. The nationalist leadership in Orissa had finally realized that the mistakes

[258] Gopabandhu in the *Samaj*, 30 May 1928, in Das, *GBR*, Vol. VI, pp. 416–17.
[259] *Asha*, 9 September 1929.
[260] *Asha*, 7 January 1929.

made during the NCM had to be avoided during the forthcoming movement. This demonstrated that the local nationalist leadership was as concerned as others for the success of the forthcoming civil disobedience agitation in the country. Its commitment to regional issues in no way diverted its attention from national issues like fighting the British colonial rule and striving for the country's freedom. Probably it was this which may be noted as a unique aspect of the national movement and politics in Orissa during the period.

Conclusion

I

National awakening in Orissa dates back to the 1860s when the state fell victim to the great famine of 1866.[1] Millions of people starved to death and many more emigrated during the famine. As per the *Orissa District Gazetteers* (1995), in the Cuttack district alone out of a total population of 1,503,629 in 1865, not less than 378,009 people perished and about 53,557 people either emigrated or disappeared, making a total loss of 431,366 persons. This was nearly 30 per cent of the total population during the period.[2] The loss in other districts, particularly in coastal Orissa, was probably no less than that in Cuttack. According to Fakir Mohan Senapati, an eyewitness to the famine, "three million people died and almost a third of the population was wiped out. Those who survived the trauma were scattered away hither and thither".[3] Locally known as the *Naanka Durvikshya*, for it occurred in the ninth regnal year of the then raja of Puri, the famine was followed by a change in the social and political life of Orissa. The change was partly due to the

[1] The terms "state" and "Orissa" are used here very loosely to denote the tracts inhabited by the Oriya-speaking people. This was known as Orissa during the period under study. Later on most of these tracts got amalgamated and were made to form a separate Orissa Province in April 1936.

[2] Nrusinha Charan Behuria, ed., *Orissa District Gazetteers, Cuttack*, Cuttack, 1995, p. 106.

[3] Fakir Mohan Senapati, *My Times and I* (autobiography), translation by J.V. Boulton, Bhubaneswar, 1985, p. 27.

famine which, besides causing large-scale deaths, exhibited the apathy of the authorities towards the local problem. The newly-educated persons from Orissa, though numerically not very strong, reacted sharply against the tragedy. Described as intellectuals, intelligentsia and nationalist intelligentsia, these educated persons had their apparent concern for the common societal needs, which placed them as a distinct social group during the period.[4] They looked afresh at the British rule and criticized it for the large-scale human devastation during the famine. But for the unwise official policy, the famine and the resultant deaths could have been averted, the intellectuals complained. Even after 63 years of British rule (the East India Company occupied Orissa in 1803), the only road between Orissa and Calcutta was unmetalled and unbridged. The waterways by sea, which had developed during the pre-British period, witnessed a steep decline after the coming of the British. Since the lower-level non-British officials working in the local administration were generally not from Orissa, they were alleged to have had very little concern for the local people and society. When the higher officials, who were Europeans, looked for proper information, the lower-level officials hid the reality. Due to severe drought and crop failure, famine was imminent, but the authorities were not aware of it. Consequently, the government failed to take adequate precautionary measures to meet the exigencies created by the famine. The crisis was aggravated due to the mishandling of the situation, the intelligentsia complained.

[4] In his novel, *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya*, Gopal Chandra Praharaj deals with the well-to-do persons of the village and concludes that a "thinking person" is different from others, who, as he says, are *prakrutistha* (materialist) persons. It is not education, nor knowledge in a particular language, rather concern for general societal needs, which is an essential quality of a thinking person. Praharaj says such a thinking person is not at all concerned about his personal needs. The author laments that the societal crises are mainly due to the absence of a sufficient number of thinking persons. Otherwise, "the earth would have been like heaven", he concluded. See, Praharaj, *Bhagabat Tungire Sandhya* (1900), Cuttack, n.d., p. 114. In a similar vein, Madhusudan Das said that, "National life will not be realized unless people learn to sacrifice their individual interests to the cause of the nation. Until then, it would be concluded that people have not understood the meaning of national life". See, Madhusudan Das, *Jatiyo Jibana* (1903), reproduced in *Utkalshree*, Balasore, 2005, p. 2. Gangadhar Meher wrote that unless the development of *Utkal Bharati* is looked into, self-development can never be considered as real development. See, Pradhan, ed., *Gangadhar Granthavali*, Cuttack, reprint 1990, p. 246.

Fakir Mohan Senapati, who was at the time headmaster of the Mission School at Balasore, one of the worst-hit towns during the famine, gave a vivid description about the famine in his autobiography. While describing the crisis he asserted that it was aggravated due to the ignorance of the high officials and mischief played by some low-level officials. He wrote:

> I think Mr [T.E] Ravanshaw, Orissa's great friend and benefactor, had at that time been newly appointed as commissioner. He received a communication from the government in either September or October: there was every likelihood of famine in Orissa due to drought. Was there any need for Government action to safeguard its subjects? If so, what action was feasible? In order to prepare his reply, the commissioner consulted the clerks in the *kucheri*. The two *sheristadar*s said: "There's no need for concern about possible famine. There is sufficient paddy stored away in the country in the homes of zamindars and dealers to last a year". Seeing that the *Sheristadar*s had already said this, the clerks and *Peshkar*s felt it incumbent upon themselves to add to it, in order to please their chiefs: "The zamindar of Gopalpur has ten granaries stored with three hundred thousands mounds of paddy", said the commissioner's *Peshkar*. "Besides which, he has silos containing thousands more mounds. One could also get at least two hundred and forty thousand mounds of paddy from Sama Sahu in Bhimpur. Besides which the small-scale dealers have granaries crammed with it. They alone could keep Orissa going for a couple of months". The *Peshkar* of the Political Department, doubling the figures, estimated that people had lakhs of mounds of paddy in their homes; whilst the estimates of the clerks indicated that Orissa had unlimited stores of paddy and could manage a year. The commissioner replied to the Government that there might be a short-fall in Orissa, but there were sufficient stocks of paddy for one year. The commissioner made a great mistake. Before reporting to the Government, he ought to have made a thorough enquiry into how much paddy was stocked in Orissa, who held the stocks and whether in the event of a general crisis they would sell or distribute them.[5]

[5] Senapati, *My Times and I*, pp. 28–30.

Following the famine, the intellectuals linked the large-scale deaths to the question of human dignity. Because of official apathy and lack of minimum dignity, people died like beasts. As thinking persons they expressed their concern in the available forums and strove for a "respectable" social order based on modern western values. The lack of general and political education among the people, the careless and partisan attitude of the government, the discriminatory attitude of the "insensitive" lower-level native officials and the existing social evils were considered to be the major hindrances to their conceived social order. They started printing presses and brought out journals and newspapers, and made all out efforts to open educational institutions for disseminating knowledge among the people. In 1866, Gouri Shankar Ray brought out the *Utkal Dipika,* an Oriya weekly, from Cuttack. The next year, the *Bodh Dayinee* and *Sambad Vahika* started publication from Balasore. Subsequently, the *Sambalpur Hiteishini* (from Bamanda), the *Utkal Hiteishini* (from Cuttack) and many other journals were brought out. These journals became the intellectual forums for criticizing society for preserving the obscurantist social order. They also served the purpose of public forums for warning the authorities against their dereliction of duties. Besides, the press set up a linkage among the people. While criticizing the government, the intellectuals also cooperated with it in its educational endeavours. The princes and zamindars, who were probably the only affluent classes in Orissa then, were also urged to extend necessary material support by taking up welfare measures like building of schools and to improve the communication and transport links in their respective areas of influence. The intellectuals' concern for such societal needs in the late nineteenth century could be seen as the beginning of a national life or nationalist identity movement in Orissa.[6]

[6] In an essay, *Jatiyo Jibana* (National Life) written in 1903, Madhusudan Das, a pioneer of the nationalist identity movement in Orissa, listed out the basic features of a national life or nationalism. Accordingly, "living for serving the cause of the society" as against "serving for self alone", "mutual understanding" as against hostility between the different communities and the "desire to sacrifice one's self-interest" in the greater interest of the community were some basic characteristics essential for the growth of national life in a society. In the same essay, he described "Mother Utkal" as an incarnation of "Mother India". "They are not rivals, nor are they enemies of each other", he said. They are two forms of a common species desiring to treat their children as per the needs of the children, he stated. See, Madhusudan Das, *Jatiya Jibana,* in *Utkalshree,* Balasore, 2005, pp. 1–3.

Before 1936, Orissa had been fragmented into many parts, each one of them being attached to a separate presidency or provincial administration. The southern part, known as the Ganjam Agency, had been attached to the Madras Presidency, the western part to the Central Provinces, while the Orissa Division comprising Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts formed a part of the Bengal Presidency. In the late nineteenth century, on the one hand, the Oriya linguistic and cultural identity was at stake because the people were numerically weak in their respective presidencies and provinces. But, on the other hand, the said identity was in the making as in other contemporary societies because of the rapid changes in the socio-political sphere during the period. Thus, the period witnessed the blooming of modern Oriya literature by its exponents like Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843–1918), Radhanath Ray (1848–1909), Madhusudan Rao (1853–1912) and Gangadhar Mehar (1862–1924). They also faced the threat of the abolition of Oriya as a language in schools and government records. In Sambalpur and its adjoining Oriya-speaking tracts, which were part of the Central Provinces till 1905, Oriya was replaced by Hindi in the offices in 1896 only to be restored in 1901 after a prolonged agitation over the issue by the local intelligentsia. Like the moderates of the time, the agitators used all constitutional forms like signature campaigns, distribution of leaflets, sending of memoranda and deputation of delegations to the authorities and writing in newspapers and journals to press for their demands. Finally, when Oriya was restored in the region, it not only meant their success, but it was also a success of the moderates' strategy of agitation as a whole. Though they had no apparent organizational and formal relations with the moderates outside, they could succeed in getting Oriya restored by adopting the moderate political strategy. This generated new hope, especially among the intelligentsia in Orissa. Further, when intellectuals from different parts of the state joined together for pressing a common issue, a political Orissa in its united form became a near reality. In coastal Orissa, which was attached to the Bengal Presidency, the cultural threat came from Bengali and in south Orissa, which was attached to the Madras Presidency, from Telugu. In order to counter

the threat of regional domination, a strong linguistic and cultural identity movement, known as the Oriya Movement and Orissa Movement, grew in the region. It took up various issues for improving the general lot of the people and strove for unity on the basis of their common language and culture. It emerged alongside the nationalist identity movement. This former movement continued till the formation of a separate Orissa Province in April 1936. However, it remained, though in a subdued form, even after that.

Led by a common group of intellectuals, the two movements did not counterpose to each other. Orissa could be a solid example of adequate blending of national issues with the local regional issues. The process of nation-making was not in opposition to the regional aspirations of the people there. They complemented one another, which resulted in their mutual growth in the state during the period. Thus, the intellectuals set up a regional platform called the Utkal Union Conference (UUC) in 1903 to take up local issues, consistently demanded amalgamation of all Oriya-speaking tracts under one political administration and later on for a separate Orissa Province, and strongly protested against all attempts at cultural and social domination by others.[7] On the other hand, they took up the national issues, like the nationalists outside, in the forums available to them. They regularly attended the annual sessions of the INC and championed the cause of national unity. Their national song in their regional platform (the UUC) was called *Bharat Gitika*, which had the words, "Thou art the mother of us all, Oh, India!" While to Fakir Mohan, India was a *tanpura* and the regions like Utkal were its inseparable strings, to Madhusudan Das, Utkal and Bharat were two distinct forms of one mother species. Similarly, to Gopabandhu Das, who led the Congress in Orissa since its foundation in 1920 till his untimely death in 1928, a regional issue, like the Oriya

[7] The main objectives of the movement, as explained by the president of the UUC, translated as the *Oriya Sammilani*, in 1904, were as follows: to bring unity among the Oriya-speaking people living in different parts of the "Pradesh"; to bring development in their agriculture, trade and industry; to develop their educational standard; to develop the local language and culture; and to bring social reforms. See, Devendra Kumar Das, ed., *Utkal Sammilani: 1903–1936*, Rourkela, 2005, p. 142.

linguistic and cultural identity issue, was as much national as the national issues. The two could not be hostile to each other, the way true nationalism was not in opposition to internationalism. In the same way they could remain together, he pointedly argued.[8]

With over two dozen princely states, locally called *gadjat*s, and a large number of zamindari estates, Orissa had a strong class of princes and zamindars present during the period. These princes and zamindars were apparently the most affluent class in the local society. Their active participation in all social, cultural and political movements was a significant aspect of local history. Such participation was possible because as a group of newly-educated people, they were not different from the nationalist intelligentsia. Particularly on the issue of the Oriya linguistic and cultural identity, they were one with the others. Second, their landed interests suffered due to the infiltration of absentee landlords from outside, which was a noticeable feature of British rule in Orissa. Third, the nascent nationalist agitation was not overtly anti-colonial during the period and could accommodate the princely class despite its allegiance and loyalty to the government. In other words, there was scope for these princes and zamindars to join the political movement. They funded and attended the annual sessions of the UUC. Many of them like the princes of Parikud, Madhupur, Mayurbhanj, and Baikunthanath De, a zamindar from Balasore presided over the UUC. It is interesting to note that their association with the movement got the intellectuals' support in return, which they badly needed for dealing with many administrative and judicial issues. Madhusudan Das was the legal advisor to many of them; Fakir Mohan worked as *dewan* in many states. Besides, the late nineteenth century could be seen as a transition period in which the intelligentsia's faith in the "over-arching" capacity of the feudal class, on the one hand, and the efforts to mobilize the common people for accomplishing the national task, on the other hand, went side by side for quite sometime, though the former was waning. This is

[8] Gopabandhu Das, while speaking in the provincial conference at Bolgarh in November 1925, had argued that the Orissa issue was not separable from the all-India issues. See, *Asha* (Berhampur), 30 November 1925.

conspicuous in the writings of Gangadhar Meher who appeals to the *raja, maharaja*s and the common people simultaneously for the redressal of the grievances of *Utkal Janani*.[9] Particularly for funding the various socio-political activities, the intellectuals greatly depended on the material support which came mainly from the princely class. Whether it was for opening of any school, or for the publication of a journal, or a literary work, or for holding meetings and conferences, the intellectuals looked forward to the monetary contributions being made by the affluent princely classes in the state.

A great limitation of the princely class was its unflinching loyalty to the government. Due to the loyalists' involvement, the political movement faced many problems. First, it tilted towards Oriya parochialism, which was apparently not anti-British at that moment, thereby counterposing the regional issue to the national issue. Second, with the passage of time (that is, say since the Anti-Partition Movement in Bengal in 1905), when the INC representing the various nationalist forces became overtly anti-colonial, the loyalists restrained the Orissa Movement from becoming so. As a result, a more intimate relation between the intellectuals of Orissa and the Congress could not be built up in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Third, the intellectuals increasingly realized the need for political mobilization of the common people for strengthening the movement in the state. But this was not possible without highlighting the agrarian issues which might lead to a clash with the princely classes. In other words, the mutual antipathy between the "loyalist" or feudal elements, and the tribal and peasants gradually came in the way of the nascent nationalist agitation in Orissa.

From 1905–06 onwards, a new political trend emerged within the Oriya Movement. Without diluting the regional issues, this new trend demanded complete integration of the movement with the Congress and marginalization of the loyalists in politics. It reacted

[9] For revoking the order of abolition of Oriya as the official language in Sambalpur, Gangadhar Meher appealed to the princes and zamindars, whom he considered all powerful. The appeals, written in the form of poems (*Bharati Rodana* and *Utkala Bharatinka Nibedana*) were published in the press in 1894 and 1896, so that people at large could take up the issue. See, Pradhan, *Gangadhar Granthavali*, pp. 438, 444.

against feudal oppression and dared to challenge the hegemony of the princely classes. It also questioned their unflinching loyalty to the government. This was a trend specific to the nationalist politics of Orissa and needs to be understood in the given social context. For convenience it is described as "moderate nationalist" in the present work. This trend comprised the second and the young generation of the intelligentsia. The first generation of the intelligentsia, described as "liberals" in the work, had no basic difference with the moderate nationalists with regard to the objectives and strategy of the movement. They also believed in widening the base of the movement by mobilizing the people and by confronting the government as well as the princely class, but at a slower pace. Hence the difference between the two nationalist trends remained throughout. The growing difference in pace between the two led them to be seen as two distinct and different trends, that is, the liberals and the moderate nationalists, in Orissa politics. In other words, the first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed three distinct political trends in the state. They were (*a*) the "loyalists" comprising the princes and the zamindars and their supporters, (*b*) the "liberals" comprising the first generation of the modern intelligentsia and (*c*) the "moderate nationalists" comprising the second and the younger generation among the nationalists. The loyalists and the moderate nationalists were posed against each other while the liberals vacillated between the two, for they objected to the moderate nationalists' proposal for radical actions and, on the other hand, did not appreciate the loyalists' being overtly loyal to the government. Madhusudan Das as the doyen of the liberals started a *Praja-Pratinidhi Sabha* for mobilizing the ryots in 1912, but objected to the merger of the UUC with the Congress in 1919 and 1920. He had even become a member of the preparatory committee for the Bankipur Congress in 1912. Thus, he preferred the Oriya Movement to maintain its independent identity without any apparent affiliation to the INC.[10] This resulted in an intense

[10] Madhusudan Das refused to attend the annual sessions of the UUC in 1919 and 1920 because the moderate nationalists, who had been demanding merger with the Congress, were numerically very strong there. See, Das, *Utkal Sammilani*, p. 449.

struggle between the three trends for hegemony over the national movement. The formation of the UPCC and the UUC's merger with it on the eve of the NCM in December 1920 demonstrated the initial assertion of the young moderate nationalists over the other two political trends.

II

The NCM was the first major mass campaign in Orissa. The nationalist leadership consisting mostly of students and youth, with very little political backing from the experienced and elderly intellectuals, used its innovative faculties and youthful zest to expand the movement throughout the state. The provincial Congress unit formed in end of December 1920 was as young as the leadership and had to consolidate its position alongside the movement. Gopabandhu Das (1877–1928) was the seniormost leader in the UPCC. Most of the others, such as Nabakrishna Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj, Harekrishna Mahatab, Birkishor Das, Laxmi Naryan Mishra, were youths in their early 20s. These were some of the weaknesses as well as strengths of the NCM in Orissa. Because of the absence of senior intellectuals (like Madhusudan Das), the movement could not make as much inroads as it should have in the local society. But, because the youth held the leadership, many innovative and creative forms were used for making the movement effective and successful. As a result, the movement in Orissa was not a mere replication and prototype of the movement elsewhere or of yesteryears. The young leadership used the regional peculiarities and created a local ethos, used local cultural symbols and blended the regional issues with the prevailing all-India issues for maximizing the impact of the movement. This, however, did not dilute the all-India strategy of the Congress. Thus, when the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms Committee ignored the nationalists' demands and led to the frustration of the nationalists' hopes, the Orissa Congress leaders described it as a great personal disrespect to the local Oriya Movement as well, which had extended all possible help to the government with the hope of getting the different

Oriya-speaking tracts amalgamated under one political administration. Similarly, the adoption of Hindustani as the official language of the Congress at the Amritsar session in 1919 was construed as a great achievement of the local linguistic movement, which had been emphasizing the natural use of the mother tongue and vernacular language in all official forums. Further, non-violence as a means of struggle was described as a contribution from the Orissan legacy to the Indian national movement. Such efforts to internalize the NCM were buttressed when the Congress resolved to allow the formation of its provincial units on a linguistic basis in 1920. The local leadership highlighted this as a recognition of the Oriya linguistic identity by the nationalists as a whole. In other words, the Congress recognized Orissa as a province, long before such recognition came from the official quarter of the government. This strengthened the position of the young nationalists who had been arguing for integration of the UUC with the INC and for the blending of the regional issues with the national issues, because the two were complementary and not hostile to each other. Similarly, the large-scale deaths due to the famine of 1919 in the aftermath of drought and floods and due to the spread of influenza and malaria in many parts of the state were seen as necessary reasons for non-cooperating with the government, which had failed to provide the necessary relief to the people during the crises. While the *UD* of Cuttack wrote that 80 per cent of households in Puri had to forgo cooking for long stretches of time,[11] the *Prajamitra* of Aska quoted official sources to conclude that the death rate was far higher than the birth rate in British Orissa in 1919.[12] The UUC in its Puri Session (1919) held the government responsible for its "failure to provide relief to the victims of drought and floods, and demanded suspension of all revenue collections till the situation improved".[13]

This, however, does not suggest that the "Punjab killings" and the "Khilafat wrong", the two immediate causes of the NCM, did not get attention in the nationalist agitation in Orissa. In fact, the

[11] *UD*, Cuttack, 3 November 1918.
[12] *Prajamitra*, 30 January 1920.
[13] *Utkal Sevak*, 8 January 1920.

Punjab killings had such a great impact that even some of the staunch liberals changed their views about British rule and became strong critics of the government after the Jalianwalabagh incident. This was reflected in a poem by Gangadhar Meher who sang of the treatment meted out to the Indian people after the war and the happenings in the land of the five rivers (Punjab), and said that the people could realize the “true” (anti-Indian) nature and character of the British rule in India. The liberals’ understanding that colonial rule aimed at the ultimate welfare of Indian people underwent a basic change after the Punjab killings of 1919. Similarly, the Khilafat issue had its impact on certain pockets like Sambalpur where leaders belonging to both the Muslim and Hindu communities held meetings in the local temple complexes and resolved not to slaughter cows during the ensuing *Bakr Id*. In a typical Hindu–Muslim unity move, a resolution also proposed to encourage *gopalan* (cow-keeping) among the two communities as a counter to cow slaughter. The Muslim mobilization in Sambalpur, which was largely due to the Khilafat issue, had greatly helped the boycott of the local *zilla* school and the opening of a national school in early January 1921. It also had its impact on the council elections in November 1920. The Muslim voters boycotted the elections en masse.

Besides the holding of public meetings and demonstrations, *kirtan* and *bhajan* (singing of prayer songs) also became two popular forms of agitation during the period. Over 72 *kirtan* troupes received Mahatma Gandhi and marched in a procession alongside him when the latter arrived at Bhadrak in March 1921. Leaders arrested and facing trials during the movement were often escorted to jail by such *kirtan* troupes. Mobilization of *kirtan* troupes for political activities only showed the general acceptability of the agitation in the local society. This was further demonstrated when Lord Jagannath and his famous car were draped in *khadi* in a few selected nationalist pockets. The local nationalist press described the bonfire of foreign cloth as *jagna* (religious sacrifice) and the *charkha* as the *sudarshan chakra* (in the sense of a remedy to all evil designs of the adversaries) for giving social sanctity to the agitation. These were not only religious, but social and cultural symbols for the nationalists in

Orissa. Likewise, local issues like oppression, the *sarbarakar*s' (village officers) loss of traditional rights over land, poor salaries of the primary school teachers and hardships suffered by the peasants during the revenue settlement operations were highlighted along with national issues for expanding the base of the NCM. By such creative use of traditional symbols, the young nationalists tried to internalize the NCM as a local movement. They did so for the local issues were considered basic ingredients and integral components of the national movement. The movement was portrayed as a development, which was emerging from within and the issues were very real, not remote, to the local participants of Orissa.

While the response of the students and the youth was quite spectacular, women, tribals and the business class were almost conspicuous by their absence in the movement. In places like Sambalpur, school students of the tenth and eleventh standards boycotted the government schools, started national schools and ran the Congress show almost entirely on their own initiative since early January 1921. It was mostly the hostel boarders, whose guardians had no immediate control over them, and Muslim students, whose guardians gave tacit approval, who took the lead there. The news about their actions motivated many senior students and other nationalist-minded people to jump into the campaign. At *Satyavadi* in Puri district (where Gopabandhu Das and his colleagues had started a residential school, took up relief programmes, pursued works of social reform and later on established a strong nationalist press, the *Satyavadi* [1913] and the *Samaj* [1919]), the students, again mostly hostel boarders, ignored their guardians' directives and "pressurized" the nationalist management (consisting of Congress leaders) for the conversion of the school into a nationalist institution on 21 January 1921. Most of the national schools started during the period were run by those senior students who had withdrawn from their institutes in the wake of the NCM. Barring a few, the entire provincial leadership was drawn from among the students and the youth.

But the response of many other classes was lukewarm. Lack of tribal participation, though the tribal defiance of colonial rule and

feudal oppression was not unheard of during the period, can be directly traced to the nationalist failure to comprehend the complex tribal question. Unlike their liberal predecessors, the young nationalists understood the peasant or ryot question and highlighted the *raja–praja* (ruler and ruled) dichotomy. But, like the liberals, they failed to articulate the tribal and non-tribal differences. Neither was there any tribal in the nationalist leadership nor was there any specific tribal issue in the NCM during the period. Tribal participation in Orissa began largely in the early 1940s.[14]

The response of the lawyers and government officials did not show any uniform pattern. Some lawyers like Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra gave up their practice and some government officials like Gopabandhu Choudhury, Surendra Nath Das, Jaymangal Rath, Anand Jena and Birakishor Das resigned from service to jump into the movement. There were many lawyers who occasionally got associated with the Congress' work when the movement was on its rise. But lawyers as a class did not join the movement and conveniently identified themselves with the

[14] Though the period and incidents do not relate to the 1920s, one is tempted to refer to Gopinath Mohanti, the famous novelist from Orissa, who worked as a middle-level officer in Koraput between 1940 and 1944. Mohanti, whose novels like the *Paraja* and *Amritara Santana*, are based on the Koraput tribes, describes that the nationalist agitation began to have an impact among the tribals only during the early 1940s. It was apparent in the form of fearlessness of the local tribes against the authorities. They refused to do *bethi* (unpaid labour) for the Jeypore Maharaja (prince) due to which many of the princely *dakbangalow*s were abandoned. The tribals would not repair them free of cost. A "thug" collected a huge sum of donations from many villages on the promise that he would "join the fight" against the government and "fetch freedom" for the people. By freedom he meant the tribals' right to felling of trees and *podu* (Jhum) cultivation, preparation of local beer, non-payment of *sistu* (tax) and "absence of any trouble from others". Mohanti also describes an incident at the Dasmantpur *thana* of Koraput during 1941–42. "One day a large number of *Khond*s came to the *thana* and told the police sub-inspector, 'The country is ours; we shall set fire on the *thana*, then proceed to Koraput'. The sub-inspector convinced them, 'The country is yours, this *thana* is also yours; why will you burn it?' They were convinced. They took the sub-inspector and proceeded to Koraput. The sub-inspector was riding on a horse. The *Khond*s asked, 'The country is ours, we are the *sarkar*, you are our *naukar* (servant); when we go on foot, how dare you ride on a horse?' The sub-inspector agreed and walked along with the *Khond*s to Koraput. On reaching Koraput they found that nothing had changed there; they [the *Khond*s] were finally led to jail". See, Gopinath Mohanti, *Srotaswati* (autobiography), Vol. II, Cuttack, 2000, pp. 325–26.

"liberals". Congress leaders like Gopabandhu Das often blamed the lawyers for the "failure" of the movement in Orissa. Their involvement would have given a greater social sanctity to the movement because they were "elderly" by age and "educated" by status. Moreover, the programme of non-cooperation with the colonial judicial system and establishment of *swaraj* panchayats would have gained a firmer ground if the lawyers had criticized it, the nationalists complained. Laxmi Narayan Mishra from Sambalpur was more forthright in his criticism of the lawyers, who, he said, joined the NCM initially, but backed out subsequently. "It is due to their betrayal that the local national school in Sambalpur was closed". Writing in 1923, he even condemned the legal profession as "anti-national" and the lawyers as a class of "selfish people".[15] On the other hand, some support came to the nationalists from an unexpected quarter, namely, the serving government officials. One such official was Sakhichand, the Puri police superintendent, who helped Gopabandhu Das.[16]

The establishment of *swaraj* panchayats and the campaign for *khadi* and prohibition were some significant aspects of the NCM. This had been possible largely due to their traditional base in the local society. However, they could have been, probably, a bigger success, because many panchayats functioned in the countryside and served the same purpose as the Congress *swaraj* panchayats. In places like Sambalpur and Ganjam, traditional handlooms had a significant presence, though they were on the decline and the weavers were emigrating to places like the Assam tea gardens after the coming of the British. Similarly, the idea of prohibition had an edge over drinking of liquor in the local Oriya society. Because of such social support, even the arch enemies of the NCM could be appealed to cooperate with the non-cooperators. When the B&O

[15] *Sadhana*, 5 February 1923.

[16] Laxmi Narayan Sahu described this incident which revealed how the Congress leaders secretly helped the *gadjat meli* and certain police officers were trying to assist them in their own way. See, Sahu, *Mo Barabula Jibana* (Autobiography) Cuttack, 1968, reprint 1990, p. 81; Godavarish Mishra also described how a Muslim police inspector literally urged him to initiate the NCM and donated Rs 41 for initial expenditure in Singhbhum. See, Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, Vol. IV, Cuttack, 1972, p. 121.

government brought out a notification in its official gazette to encourage drinking of liquor, Gopabandhu Das highlighted the issue to garner support from all classes of people, including the loyalist princely class, for non-cooperation, for it proved that the government was basically anti-people in nature.[17] Even with very little initiative, the Congress could have succeeded in these aspects. But, despite efforts, the UPCC was not always able to do so due to the lack of a strong cadre base. Thus, it was only after the decline of the NCM that one Krutartha Acharya, who had boycotted the school in Sambalpur, organized the traditional weavers, formed a cooperative society and saved the dying Sambalpuri handloom industry. Though it was not pure *khadi*, the growth of the Sambalpuri handloom industry served the same purpose as *khadi* by promoting *swadeshi* and by giving a sense of self-respect and self-reliance to the local weaver class.

A number of national schools and *ashram*s were set up during the NCM. A council, called the *Utkal Swarajya Siksha Parishad,* was constituted to coordinate the activities of all the national schools in the state. Though the council aimed at preparing a "nationalistic" curriculum for the schools, nothing much was actually achieved. Thus, the national schools' curriculum was no different from the curriculum of other schools except that a little time was devoted to discussion on the national movement and about the oppressive and exploitative nature of British rule and the like in the classrooms. At times, the senior students of the school also enjoyed the freedom to attend political meetings and to join campaigns in the countryside. However, soon after the high days of the movement, hopes were belied and public interest in national schools began to recede.[18] Similarly, many Congress activists converted their personal houses into *ashram*s and made them the centre of the national movement and of nationalist activities. Thus, Gopabandhu Choudhury's parental house became a *swarajyashram* and the party office in Cuttack during and after the non-cooperation stir. Hardly any new

[17] Das, *GBR,* Vol. VI, Cuttack, 1978, p. 56–57.

[18] Godavarish Mishra, who was in charge of such a school at Chakradharpur since 1918, discussed this aspect in an essay in 1941. See, Mishra, *Godavarish Granthavali*, p. 120.

building came up for starting the *ashram*s. Likewise, the nationalist press got a new life during the NCM. Many vernacular journals were founded, some of them during the NCM, but many others on the eve of, or immediately after, the movement. The *Samaj* and the *Asha* came out as weeklies in 1919 (and became daily newspapers on the eve of the CDM), the *US* and the *Sadhana* (both from Sambalpur) in 1920, the *Seba* and the *Swarajya Samachar* in 1921 and the *Prajatantra* in 1923. Another significant aspect was their open identification with the Congress. Until then the press was not so openly linked with the party. Because of their direct involvement with the movement, the language and style of these vernacular papers became simple and colloquial, which contributed to their popularity during the period. However, instead of being praised for their innovative style, these journals were often criticized by other contemporary newspapers (read nationalists, but not Congress organs) for stooping down to "such low levels". Interestingly, the UPCC as an organization did not have any direct control either over these vernacular journals, or over the national schools or *ashram*s. As a result, these institutions functioned purely through local initiatives. It was due to the lack of any form of control from the central organization that the people associated with these nationalist institutions could creatively articulate their understanding of the issues and independently carried out the activities in their respective areas of operation.

The NCM was largely confined to a few pockets in the state. Barring Kanika, where a powerful agrarian movement began in 1921–22, and Keonjhar, probably none of the princely states and zamindari estates were affected by the movement. Even in *Mughalbandi* Orissa, only some towns could witness it. There were hardly any women and tribals involved in it. The urban middle classes, especially businessmen, most of whom were outsiders, and the "English-educated people" (the liberals were often ridiculed as the "English-educated people" by Congressmen), did not come out spontaneously in support of the movement. Throughout the period, the UPCC lacked a solid cadre base. As a result, despite their willingness, the people in general could not be brought in, the

Congress leaders lamented. Due to this, the UPCC could not "meet the quota" fixed by the AICC by the set deadline, that is, 30 June 1921. Against the set target of 100,000 primary members, it could enroll only a little over 40,000 primary members. With regard to the collection of funds for the Tilak *Swaraj* Fund, its performance was even worse: Rs 22,070 against the target of Rs 100,000. Some 50,000 *charkha*s were to be distributed for *khadi* work. The total number distributed did not exceed 15,000.

In spite of all these drawbacks, the NCM was a major break-through in the political life of Orissa. Formally, it inaugurated the Congress movement, which henceforth became synonymous with the national movement in the state and integrated the regional movement with it. Identification with the Congress helped in the consolidation of the nationalist activities in Orissa. After coming under its influence, the Oriya Movement became militant. Henceforth, the agrarian movements, like that in Kanika, acquired a new dimension because of their integration with the national movement. They were no longer isolated incidents which could be easily put down by using various coercive methods and inhuman means. Henceforth, they got nation-wide publicity and their suppression attracted large-scale public attention and condemnation. This was probably no small an achievement of the nationalists in Orissa.

III

The aftermath of the NCM, that is the period between 1923–27 is characterized as the non-active phase of the national movement. The period witnessed quite a few charges of embezzlement of public funds against some of the prominent party leaders, intense squabbling between Congressmen, disintegration of the party into several factions, the rise of parochial tendencies and the emergence of communal forces in parts of the state. As the different nationalist groups had integrated into a single group on the eve of the NCM, in the aftermath they disintegrated and tried to maintain their distinct local and regional identities. Such divisive tendencies became more

apparent because of the absence of any mass action during the period.

Probably the first communal riot in the history of Orissa broke out during this period, that is, in 1926. But more tragic was the fact that some of its instigators individually belonged to the Congress Party. Prominent Swarajists such as Nilakantha Das and Bhubanananda Das and non-Swarajists like Gopabandhu Das and Harekrishna Mahatab were in the forefront in this regard. While Gopabandhu founded the Orissa unit of the Hindu Mahasabha in mid-1926, Nilakantha campaigned for it, raised funds for its working and made elaborate plans to set up *goshala*s for the protection of cows, and *byayamshala*s for training Hindu youth.[19] The *Utkal-ashram,* the DCC office at Berhampur, often became the venue for Hindu Mahasabha meetings in 1925.[20] In Balasore, Mahatab was instrumental in the formation of one *Birastami Akhadadal,* a Hindu defensive squad, which led the Hindu processionists and organized "protest meetings" against the authorities for not controlling the communal riots in 1926. In such meetings, the Muslims were held responsible for the riots. This resulted in the Muslim attacks on the *Swarajyashram*, the DCC office, in early 1926.[21] In a similar vein, the *Asha* blamed the Muslim community, "barring a few Muslim youths as in Aligarh", for the trouble, while the *UD* singled out the "alien" (outsider and non-Oriya) Muslims for bringing the seeds of communal tension to a peaceful state like Orissa.[22] The nationalists' open identification with Hindu interests was probably because they considered Muslims to be an alien community because of the sparse population of the community in the state. These leaders could not comprehend the complexity of the communal problem. They construed it as something against the interests of Orissa and probably nothing beyond that. Hence, championing the Hindu interests and the interests of Orissa could go on concurrently in their political agenda. Interestingly, this could also fit well in their *swaraj*

[19] *Asha*, 14 December 1925.
[20] *Asha*, 13 July 1925.
[21] Mahatab, *Sadhanar Pathe* (Autobiography), Cuttack 1972, p. 103; *UD*, 12 June 1926.
[22] *Asha*, 1 March 1926.

programme. On the other hand, the Muslims, sometimes described as “outsider Muslims” and “pathans”, were blamed for the trouble as they were “aliens” and were said to be “hostile” to the interests of the regional community. Probably to articulate such hatred, the *Asha* showered praise on Madan Mohan Malaviya, who considered “Chamars” as superior to Christians and Muslims, because the former adhered to the Hindu religion.[23] Further, there was severe infighting between the different factions for hegemony over the movement because even after the suspension of the NCM, the Congress was the only political movement to reckon with and controlling its organization was considered to be important. Congressmen from Sambalpur complained of “coastal Orissa hegemony” and severed the Sambalpur DCC’s relations with the UPCC. In Singhbhum, the nationalists were devoted only to imparting Oriya education. They were even reluctant to align with the Congress and to sustain any formal relationship with it. Within the party, distinct groups had emerged on the basis of caste and regional affiliations: the *Satyavadi* group felt ignored as the *Bharati Mandir* group controlled the UPCC. On the other hand, many ardent supporters of the Congress like Gopabandhu Das now advocated a political line independent of the Congress as this was considered the best way to serve the interest of the people of Orissa.

But even during the height of such a supposedly “anti-climax” situation, there existed a trend which consistently worked for sustaining the “Congress work”. The trend consisted of individual party workers who pursued their activities without having any affiliation to a group. They urged the regional forces to integrate into a broad nationalist stream because they would not counterpoise the regional interests to the national interests; they remained above all communal tendencies because communalism would deter the growth of national life. They tried to generate funds within the organization because of their firm belief that funds coming from

[23] *Asha*, 22 March 1926. Recently, while visiting a primary school in Jagatsinghpur district, I heard the teacher saying: “There are 50 per cent ‘Oriya’ and 50 per cent ‘Muslim students’ in the school”. That the local Muslims are not always seen as a part of the local Oriya community is evident from this.

outside were often doled out without being adequately utilized. They quietly prepared for the “active phase” to come. As the “non-active” phase progressed, some of these Congressmen gained strength and were recognized as leaders of the movement in the state, probably because of their acceptability to various factions and accountability for party activities. After the untimely death of Gopabandhu Das in June 1928, Gopabandhu Choudhury was one such worker, who gained prominence in the party in Orissa during the CDM and after.

The Congress split into the Swarajists or Pro-changers and the Non-Swarajists or No-changers during the period. In Orissa, the No-changers were called *asahayogi*s (non-cooperators) and the Pro-changers *sahayogi*s (cooperators). In other words, the Pro-changers, Swarajists and *sahayogi*s were terms which had identical meaning and were being used interchangeably, so also the terms No-changers, Non-Swarajists and *asahayogi*s. Further, the Pro-changers got closer to the liberals like Madhusudan Das and they together proposed to give priority to the Oriya Movement over the national issues. But, as Swarajists, they did not form any separate party and continued to work as a group within the UPCC, which had come under the control of the No-changers. This tactical move, however, did not restrain this group from aligning with the Swarajists outside Orissa. In fact, Nilakantha Das, who led the Swarajists in the state, was a prominent leader of the party at the all-India level. At another level, the Swarajists were mainly drawn from the *Satyavadi gosthi*, though there were a few notable exceptions like Gopabandhu Das, who led the non-cooperators and the UPCC throughout. Further, the whole development was a very complicated political process in which there were apparent differences as well as coordination between the two main trends of nationalists during the period. Unlike the No-changers, the Swarajists concentrated on council work, but along with the former, they participated in district and local board activities, village reconstruction programmes, *khadi* campaigns and other constructive programmes. At times they even criticized the No-changers for not taking up the constructive programme effectively.

Within the councils, the Swarajists took up various basic issues like the revival of the local salt industry, land revenue hikes, prevention of floods, the Oriya linguistic question, Indianization of administration, and vehemently criticized the government for its apathy to the general welfare of the Indian people. To them the local issues were as dear as the national issues. Outside the councils, the Non-Swarajists many times even suggested to their Swarajist friends that they take up certain issues of public importance. While the nationalist press highlighted these issues, the Congressmen, the Swarajists and the Non-Swarajists together tried to initiate mass agitations on the basis of these issues. Thus, Godavarish Mishra not only raised the issue of rent hike in Khurda taluka in the B&O Provincial Council, but was mainly involved in the "no-rent-hike agitation" there. Similarly, Gopabandhu Das not only suggested to the Swarajists to take up the flood prevention issue in the councils, but also led the flood victims' agitation relating to long-term preventive measures for the control of floods in the state. Because of such coordination between the two camps, the Congressmen, despite their inner differences, were "one party" pitted against the "government party". In other words, if the differences were real, the unity was also equally real among them.

IV

In 1928 and 1929, the nationalists once again consolidated their forces. The non-active phase was soon replaced by an active phase. A nationalist tempo could be witnessed throughout the length and breadth of the country. This ultimately led to the launch of the CDM in 1930.

In Orissa, even during the non-active phase, there were some efforts for sustaining the organizational activities, which continued alongside the intense factional fights and squabbling in the party. Party meetings were regularly convened, annual conferences held and resolutions passed, though many of the resolutions remained unimplemented and under-implemented due to lack of adequate follow-up measures. Further, parochial and communal tendencies

were challenged and suggestions were offered for constructive alternatives. All this spade work was undertaken by a group of party activists, which helped the UPCC to sustain the ensuing nationalist current in 1928 and 1929. Besides, the second part of the non-active phase, which commenced from mid-1924 coinciding with the release of some prominent leaders like Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra from jail and the holding of the annual conference of the UPCC, was an advance over the preceding period. The non-cooperators effectively controlled the party organization and, henceforth, more emphasis was laid on constructive work, which really became the preparatory phase for the ensuing civil disobedience agitation in the state.

In December 1927, Mahatma Gandhi undertook a tour of the state for 20 days. Everywhere people gathered in large numbers to greet him. Even his simple words in the public meetings had their impact. This was evident in Pichukoli (Khurda), where a no-rent-hike agitation started soon after Gandhi's visit. Thereafter, the news about the Simon Commission united all nationalist forces in early 1928. Even the liberals and members of the Hindu Mahasabha formed part of the Simon Boycott Committee, constituted under Congress leadership. Besides, those Congress units which had severed their relations with the UPCC during the non-active phase, for example, the Sambalpur DCC, returned to the fold of the provincial Congress for making the boycott a grand success. Orissa had more reasons than others to boycott the Commission, cried the local nationalist press. Like the NCM, boycott of the Commission became a real issue for the people of Orissa. The *Asha* wrote that "any cooperation with the Simon Commission is nothing but suicidal for the Oriya nation",[24] while the *Samaj* doubted if the Commission had any relevance in the country.[25]

In a similar manner, the Bardoli *Satyagraha* was internalized in Orissa. Funds were raised for the *satyagraha*, which offered "an opportunity to share the national responsibility".[26] While the

[24] *Asha*, 9 January 1928.
[25] *Samaj*, 11 April 1928.
[26] Gopabandhu Das wrote in the *Samaj*, 23 May 1928.

Congress leaders initiated a ryot agitation on the "Bardoli" model at Pichukoli in Khurda, tribals and peasants without having any formal links with and approval from the Congress launched the "no-rent-hike agitations" in some princely states like Bamanda and Nilagiri during the period. When they could not withstand the pressure of the authorities, they fled to British Orissa and took refuge in the Congress offices.[27] The news about the Bardoli *Satyagraha* had convinced these people that their demands were as justifiable as those of the Bardoli peasants. Bardoli, instead of becoming an alien issue, emerged as a rallying point for articulating their local grievances. Despite being suppressed, these local agitations and the agitators became natural allies of the Congress during the CDM. While emphasizing the subtle connectivity between the Gandhian movement and the emerging *gadjat meli*s of the period, especially the Nilagiri agitation of early 1928, Gopabandhu Das wrote:

> These days the educated people [read politically-conscious people] are virtually restrained [by the authorities] from visiting the *gadjat*s. The princes no longer have any faith in them. The court cases from the *gadjat*s do not come to the *Mughalbandi* [British Orissa]. The political agent *saheb* is omnipotent there. No lawyer or *muktiyar* is consulted by him. How the complaints of the *praja* are settled by the rulers and the political agent is least known to others. Consequently, the subjects bear repression up to a limit and revolt after that. What else could they do? It is good that until today the Nilagiri peasants have not been violent. They have only fled from the state. They still have hope of getting justice from the authorities. It is good both for the state as well as the peasants. If not in any other way, the Gandhian non-violent non-cooperation method has unknowingly influenced them to adopt peaceful means of struggle. The Nilagiri Movement has amply demonstrated it.[28]

This only shows that the Congress leadership did not claim any control over the local agrarian movements, be it Nilagiri in 1928,

[27] *Samaj*, 22 February 1928.
[28] Gopabandhu Das wrote in the *Samaj*, 22 February 1928.

or Kanika in 1921. The agitations were spontaneous by nature because of acute repression and due to the absence of any constitutional means of struggle. However, as the nationalists acknowledged, there had been some indirect influences of the Gandhian method; it restrained them from resorting to violent means, which was no doubt good for the state, but more so for the agitating peasants. This was considered to be a significant achievement of the national movement in the state.[29]

The period also witnessed the emergence of new forces like the students and youth, "low" castes, women and labourers. Though some of these forces had independent growth, their emergence complemented the national movement. Like the Congress Party, these forces contributed to the making of the ensuing CDM. While realizing this aspect, the Congress leadership welcomed these forces. Thus, the communists of the "Meerut Conspiracy Case" and the revolutionaries of the "Lahore Conspiracy Case" despite having ideologies that quite diverged from that of the Congress, were seen as a group of "young patriots" devoted to the cause of the nation, which "wished them a very long life", the Congress leaders said.[30] It was probably due to this accommodating nature of the Congress that the new forces, like the regional and provincial issues, could integrate into the national current and national movement during the period.

In 1928 and 1929, the UPCC had grown organizationally and was gearing up for the forthcoming CDM. Meetings and conferences were held at the district and state levels. The Singhbhum and Sambalpur district units, which had severed their relations during the post-non-cooperation days, returned to the fold of the state unit. Anant Mishra from the Singhbhum unit agreed to preside over the Puri District Conference in 1928 and Laxmi Narayan Mishra from

[29] Gopinath Mohanti substantiates this argument in his autobiography. Referring to the tribals of Koraput, he says that they react violently without bothering about the repercussions only when exploitation and repression surpass all limits. However, such violent reactions cause more harm to them than to their adversaries in the end. See, Gopinath Mohanti, *Srotaswati*, p. 270.

[30] The *Asha* had commented referring to the "Lahore" revolutionaries, who were on a fast unto death. *Asha,* 9 September 1929.

Sambalpur attended the UPCC meeting at Cuttack on 14 January 1928.[31] Referring to the elaborate arrangements of the Calcutta Congress of 1928, the *Asha*, in an over-enthusiastic note, reported, “Never had there been such a massive hall with the seating capacity of over 15,000 audience before as in Calcutta. The speakers would be clearly audible to each and every person sitting in the hall”.[32] The UPCC, which had sent over 300 delegates there, even invited the Congress to Orissa for “its next session” in 1929. The Congress meetings invariably involved bonfires where foreign cloth would be burnt. This attracted the students and youth in large numbers. There were also reports of bonfires of foreign cloth during local festivals like the *Dola Utsav* (Holi) where slogans like *Bande Mataram*, *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai* and *Bharat Mata ki Jai* were shouted.[33]

However, not every nationalist leader would agree that the nationalist wave was progressing during the period. Gopabandhu Das, who did not foresee any course other than mass movement for achieving the nationalist goal, still saw a kind of passivity in public life in May 1928, but was sure that it would recede and be replaced by an emerging youth leadership in the state.[34] In January 1929, the *Asha* confirmed the passivity of the people and cautioned the leadership and the people not to lose patience mid-way through the movement. It wrote:

> The passivity, which reigned since the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement has not yet receded fully. In such a situation it is doubtful how the people would take the movement being proposed to be launched on the model of the Non-Cooperation Movement. An ordinary individual is not as determined as Mahatma Gandhi in his decision. However, it is a great relief that Gandhi would lead the movement once again. Whether it is within one year or a few years, he would surely lead the nation to *swaraj*…. This makes the people really

[31] *Asha*, 30 January 1928.
[32] *Asha*, 19 November 1928.
[33] *Asha*, 1 April 1929.
[34] Gopabandhu Das in the *Samaj*, 30 May 1928.

> very happy and hopeful. *Swaraj* may or may not be achieved within one year [this time], but everybody must stick to the Gandhian principles and give the maximum to make it [the movement] a real success.[35]

Throughout, the local leadership reposed its faith in the Gandhian strategies and leadership. Simultaneously, it also cautioned Gandhi, the main leader, about the common follies which the general participants might have, as in Chauri Chaura in 1922, so that the movement after being launched was not withdrawn mid-way. It also foretold the people about the possible duration of the movement so that they did not become impatient. Such realistic assessments of, and reporting about, the contemporary political developments were probably aimed at overcoming some of the plausible shortcomings of the movement to be launched thereafter. The mistakes of the NCM, the nationalist leadership in Orissa realized, needed to be avoided in the future mass movements. Further, it demonstrates that the local leadership was as concerned as other nationalists for the success of the ensuing mass movement. Its commitment to the regional issues had not diverted its attention from the broader national issue of fighting the British colonial regime and striving for the country's freedom. Probably it was this aspect which might be seen as a unique component of the national movement and politics in Orissa during the 1920s.

[35] *Asha*, 7 January 1929.

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